Cartoonist Joe Sacco's Campaign Diary

Washington MONTHLY

Bush's War on Cops

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

ptember 2003 $4.50

Joshua Micah Marshall on Presidential Deception

Jeff Greenfield on Richard Nixon • Gregg Easterbrook on the Rocket Man • How Gen. Wesley Clark Can Win

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Letter from the **Editors**

In matters of fashion, Washington is rarely ahead of the curve. Casual business attire, for instance, now standard everywhere in America, hasn't quite caught on here; an astonishing number of men still roam D.C. in suits and ties. This stubborn resistance to stylistic change has been reflected in our pages. The last time we altered the look of the magazine was 1996, and we haven't had a dramatic makeover since 1969. While there is perhaps something to be said for such constancy of appearance, it can become a bit much, like a guy who won't give up wearing his torn-up college sweatshirt. Moreover, it's hard to watch the dramatic changes taking place in Washington right now and be content with the same-ole, same-ole format. We've thought for awhile that there are ways we could make the magazine more attractive, accessible, and fun without compromising our serious coverage of politics and government. And so we have redesigned the magazine, with the help of Design Consultant Jandos Rothstein and Managing Editor Christina Larson. We hope you like it.

The first change you may have noticed is the size. The magazine is about an inch taller than it used to be. (Please note that we haven't increased the price. More *Monthly* for your money!) We've updated our logo, changed the fonts of our headlines, included more photos and graphic elements, and generally sharpened the look of the pages.

We've also added a couple of new features. At the front, there's "10 Miles Square," a department consisting of short reported narratives that take you behind the scenes to meet the characters and subcultures that really run Washington. This month, Eli Lake profiles a new group whose curious mission is to help dissidents (and perhaps the Bush administration) overthrow tyrannical regimes nonviolently. Also, Benjamin Wallace-Wells visits a top D.C. headhunter to see if the recently humiliated chairman of the FCC, Michael Powell, can still find a cushy lobbying job.

At the back of the magazine, we're proud to present "Meanwhile in America," by groundbreaking comic-book journalist Joe Sacco. Joe will be "covering" the presidential race for the *Monthly*—from places far, far removed from where the actual candidates are.

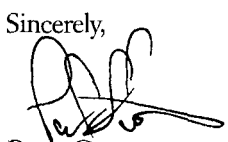
We will also continue a kick we've been on for the last year or so, of running more essays that plumb the political sociology of American culture. This month, contributing editor and axman Nicholas Thompson offers the music industry some marketing tips he's learned while selling CDs in the New York subway system, and Sarah Wildman cogitates on the bourgeois snobbery of TV's latest British import, "What Not to Wear."

In the months to come, we may be tweaking this new design or adding elements to it—if you have any suggestions (or complaints), email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

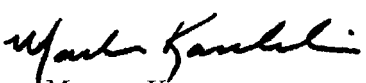
Other than that, *The Washington Monthly* will remain pretty much the same. As always, the bulk of the magazine is devoted to strongly argued, deeply reported long-form journalism that attempts to uncover what's really happening in politics and government before the rest of the press does. In this month's cover story, for instance, Benjamin Wallace-Wells reports on the hardly surprising consequence of White House policies that have decimated police forces nationwide: The murder rate is going up and criminals are winning back the streets. And Joshua Micah Marshall teases out exactly why President Bush feels compelled to deceive so much (if you have any doubt that he does, check out how Bush scored on our Mendacity Index, page 28).

We've also kept your favorite departments—Who's Who, Tidbits & Outrages, On Political Books, The Monthly Journalism Award, and, of course, Charles Peters's "Tilting at Windmills." The truth is, readers seemed to like the *Monthly* just fine before this redesign—our subscriptions rose 40 percent over the last year. But what fun is success if you can't mess with it?

Sincerely,



Paul Glastris
Editor in Chief



Markos Kounalakis
President & Publisher

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September 2003

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Letters

Gotta Have Faith

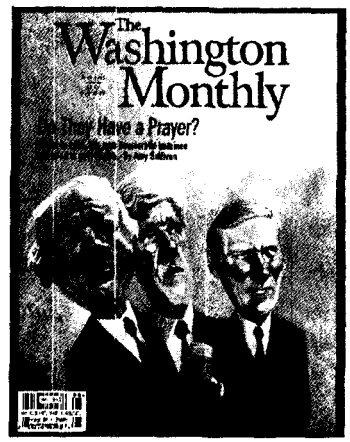
Amy Sullivan's article, "Do the Democrats Have a Prayer" (June) is good advice for Democratic presidential candidates. Let's hope they are listening.

To be viewed as sincerely religious, a candidate must have a personal history of integrity, good moral character, and religious conviction, preferably attending services at church or synagogue. Such persons are in short supply, especially among those considered to have enough experience and communication skills to be taken seriously as political candidates. Of those Democrats running, Joe Lieberman may be the only one who can be credible on the two qualities needed to beat George Bush: 1) toughness on defense and national security, and 2) the ability to, as Sullivan wrote, "speak the language of faith sincerely." Yet he may lack other superficial qualities that the electorate seems to favor: good looks and charisma.

Sullivan also recognizes that Democrats are not likely to win many hardcore anti-abortion Catholics and Christian conservatives, but she may not realize the extent of the pressure that the Catholic clergy and Catholic friends put on all practicing (e.g. churchgoing) Catholics to vote for pro-life candidates, or, as they tell us in coded language, to "vote your conscience."

In my Catholic parish, something is said about the evils of abortion almost every Sunday, and when elections are coming up brochures are handed out as we leave Mass, telling us which candidates are pro-life (mostly Republicans) and which are not (mostly Democrats). Fortunately for the Democratic Party, many practicing Catholics still vote for Democrats, despite the pressure and despite the candidates' pro-choice stance. But the Democrats in Congress don't make it easy, with most of them having just voted against a ban on partial-birth (usually late-term) abortions, which even Pat Moynihan called infanticide.

Gerald B. Fitzgerald
Plymouth Meeting, Pa.



June 2003

"Why are the current Democratic presidential candidates so afraid of talking about faith?"
—Richard Peterson

Many religious liberals today are in fact opposed to the efforts of the Bush administration and the Christian right to take our nation back to a time before President Franklin D. Roosevelt, when the federal government was not a part of most Americans' lives. The current administration seems set on rolling back the progress of the New Deal, Social Security, and other programs that provide help for poor and middle-class Americans—programs that a majority of people in this nation want to keep as they are, as a safety net for the poor and middle class.

A Democrat could criticize the White House on these grounds, while appealing to the religious concerns of many Americans. Why are the current Democratic presidential candidates so afraid of talking about faith?

In addition to your recent article, "Do The Democrats Have A Prayer," I am reminded of two articles from the *Monthly*'s December 1995 issue that also explored similar topics: "Why We Need a Religious Left" by Amy Waldman and "What's Un-Christian About the Christian Right" by Jonathan Rowe.

Richard Peterson
Pittsboro, N.C.

I believe the stronger a politician's faith, the less he or she will put that faith out there for show. We will know them instead by their good deeds, good policies, and humility.

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.
Louisville, Ky.

Help Wanted

Thank you so much for Nicholas Thompson's article, "Star Search" (June). As a Human Resources Specialist for the United States Department of Agriculture, I applaud your analysis of the recruitment and retention challenges that face the federal government today.

Although many federal employees have college degrees and often extensive backgrounds in their fields, almost all are hired at exceedingly low grade levels. Some accept jobs in which they have been classified at levels well below their abilities. Respective agencies do not necessarily educate their employees about the nuances of the ranking system. Why would they when they have acquired new talent at a deep discount? But this hardly makes sense if the real goal is not just to hire cheap labor but to attract and retain dedicated and entrepreneurial new employees.

Many people who choose to work for the federal government, including myself, are committed to serving our country. We bring significant academic ability, knowledge of our fields, and an abundance of enthusiasm to the table, yet too often our talents are not rewarded.

Aleta Haynes-Williams
United States Department of Agriculture
Alexandria, Va.

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As a former federal human resources manager, I must say your article is right on the money. Recruiting reforms started with Alan Campbell in the Carter administration, but they have not yet made it to the working level of the federal government. Beginning the program for Presidential Management Interns was a step in the right direction, but that initiative has also become enmeshed in the quagmire of bureaucracy. I applaud the efforts undertaken in support of the Homeland Security Department and the Department of Defense, as well as the General Accounting Office and the State Department as mentioned, but they need to be expanded across the government.

Remedies need to be put in place to save the future of the federal government. Someone in the administration or Congress must take an interest. The crisis in federal recruiting is here now.

John R. Nino
Atlanta, Ga.

Cat & Spouse Games

Safe in my bunker as a fellow "smug married," I have the calm to enjoy Elizabeth Austin's "In Contempt of Courtship" (June), but also to look back at popular culture's take on married life prior to the late 1960s and the sharply rising divorce rate.

Austin writes, "The gender roles may have been constricting and the shoes were impossibly tight across the toes, but it's impossible to deny the now-guilty pleasures [of 1950s courtship rituals] ... " But what was on TV then? "I Love Lucy," "The Honeymooners," "Pete and Gladys," "The Jack Benny Program." Continuous humor poking fun at the idea that marriage was something to wish for. Fussing, fighting, and incompatibility among spouses was taken for granted. Movies going back decades featured ritual sparring between sharp-tongued spouses; men desperate to not get tied down, or resigned to nagging, hectoring, or ditzy wives; and women resigned to lazy, sloppy, unappreciative husbands. By the time of "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In" in 1968-1973, America was laughing at the idea of fidelity, and on his TV show, Glenn Campbell sang hit song after hit song about drifting and avoiding commitment.

How much has changed now? According to Austin, "Dating, it seems, has become a necessary chore, rather like scrubbing down the storm windows." Whatever most of us are doing, we will do badly. But somewhere in the middle of the pendulum's swing, individuals who are tenacious, perceptive, or lucky may glean both freedom and wisdom from social changes. Making your most personal choices by taking your cue from those around you won't make you happy, if those around you aren't happy.

Robert Sercombe
Via email

Dirty Old Minds

I agree with David Greenberg's assessment in his review of Sid Blumenthal's memoir ("The Clinton Warrior," June) that the impeachment of Bill Clinton was not simply about Clinton, but about American society in general.

Yet the generation born in the 1960s and 1970s is now attaining those positions of power that the generation of the 1940s and 1950s have enjoyed for so long. Perhaps the intense interest in Monicagate was among the last public battles of a certain breed of conservative moralists.

John Bigos, Jr.
Converse, Texas

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Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor

Health by Handout

"The Bush administration is in the process of cutting the budget of CDC units including the Center for Infectious Diseases," reports the columnist Richard Reeves. Like Blanche DuBois, the CDC is reduced to relying on the kindness of strangers. Its new Emergency Response Center in Atlanta got built only because the money to finance it was put up by Bernard Marcus, the retired chairman of Home Depot. An essential public service "shouldn't have to depend on handouts," observes Barry Bloom of Harvard's School of Public Health. But that's where Bush's tax cuts and his war on Iraq have left us, without enough money to pay for basic government functions.

A Few Good Servants

Did you know the Air Force and the Navy are sending enlisted personnel to butler school? To be confident that their enlisted aides will provide generals and admirals with the spiffiest service, reports *Slate*'s Tom Anderson, the Pentagon is "enrolling some aides at the Starkey International Institute for Household Management, the country's premier school for domestic help." In case you're wondering, Anderson adds that "the Army trains its own servants at its advanced culinary program at Fort Lee, Va." Wouldn't it be a better use of these fellows to send them to relieve the guys who have been sweating it out in Iraq for too long?

Airport Heart Attack

As I was catching a plane at Reagan National Airport a few weeks ago, I noticed a defibrillator housed in a glass-covered case in the wall. Pasted over the glass was a handwritten sign saying "out-of-order." Can't you imagine the desperation of the Good Samaritan who, upon witnessing a heart attack, inquires about the location of a defibrillator, rushes to it, only to see that out-of-order sign!

Hunting Down Liberties

The ACLU is an organization of laudable purpose. But from time to time, it has displayed a tendency to focus on relatively trivial matters instead of major threats to our liberty. This instinct for the capillaries recently found expression in a lawsuit by the ACLU of West Virginia to permit hunting on Sundays. They may have a case, but with John Ashcroft loose in the land, shouldn't liberals be expending their slim resources more judiciously?

Shifting the A-Team

The war in Iraq was not pointless. We all agree Saddam Hussein was a vicious tyrant. There is, however, just so much we can do in this world. First, we must take care of the home front, at which the Bush administration has failed miserably. If we had to have a foreign war, the one that was most clearly justified was going after the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. It didn't make sense to take on another war in Iraq before we had the situation in Afghanistan in hand, and even now that obviously is not the case. We read of a resurgence of the Taliban, the failure to carry out our pledges to rebuild Afghanistan, and the unchallenged power of the warlords outside of Kabul.

Now, to top it all off, comes a report from *Time*'s Michael Duffy and Massimo Calabresi that last fall Bush shifted the special forces' A-Team that had been pursuing the Taliban and al Qaeda to Iraq, replacing it with "reservists, who rather than specializing in countering Islamic threats, were trained for operations in Russia and Spanish-speaking countries."

Easy Living

How do Supreme Court justices keep working through their seventies, even well into their eighties? One reason is that the job is not excessively demanding. A three-month recess is customary, from the beginning of July until the first Monday in October. And, as we annually point out, the number of cases they deign to hear keeps falling, from an average of 150 per year in the 1980s to just 73 last year.

Iraq's Quiet Casualties

"War casualties overflow Walter Reed Hospital." This headline is not from some left-wing anti-war publication. It appeared in the conservative, pro-Bush *Washington Times* in early August. It suggests a story I haven't seen reported by the American media. What is the total number of service people wounded or injured in Iraq since the war began? (The English newspaper *The Guardian* says "unofficial figures are in the thousands.") Where and how well have they been treated? How many have died? How many are permanently disabled? I suspect the cost of this war is much greater in human terms than the far less important, but still troubling, extra financial cost we've been learning about.

Glass House Gang

The press has finally gotten tough about Bush's relying on British intelligence for his uranium claim

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instead of checking the validity of what the Brits were telling him. But the press should ponder how often it has done the same thing itself. Think how many times you've seen a story that begins with "The president says" or "Senator X says" or "Alan Greenspan says," with the paragraphs that follow displaying not a hint of evidence that the reporter has examined the truth of the quotation. All too often, all the reporter does is seek balancing quotes—"Senator Y says Senator X is dead wrong"—but does not try to find out who was right. In fact, much of the run-up to the Iraq war was assisted by a press that mindlessly reported Bush claims without examining them.

Sex and the Sexes

That men want more sexual partners than women do has long been a matter of common observation. And it now appears confirmed by a recent study of 16,000 people from every inhabited continent conducted by David P. Schmidt of Bradley University. That is, it appears to do so until the 20th paragraph of *The Washington Post*'s story describing the Schmidt study. There we find another study conducted by Ohio State psychologist Terri Fisher. She asked a group of men and women if they masturbated, or watched soft or hardcore pornography. With a maximum score of 3 for a yes to each, the men averaged 2.32 and the women 0.89. Well, you say, that confirms the Schmidt study. But wait. When Fisher changed the rules so that the answers were deposited in a locked box, the women's average rose to 1.52. Then when the women were given the test alone in a locked room, and deposited their answers in a locked box, their score jumped to 2.04 compared to the men's 2.32. In other words, women are different, but not that different.

The Art of Redefinition

In our continuing effort to educate our readers about the culture of bureaucracy, one lesson for which there has never been a shortage of fresh examples is the Art of Redefinition. Clever bureaucrats, when confronted with a potentially embarrassing statistic, know that they should never abandon hope. Instead, they redefine whatever they are quantifying so that the bad news is either mitigated or disappears. Take the administrators of Brooklyn's Franklin Lane High School. Anxious to avoid high dropout and failure rates that might reflect badly on their performance as educators, school officials have been pushing marginal students out the door.

Franklin Lane is not the only school involved. Indeed, the practice has become widespread. "As students are being spurred to new levels of academic achievement and required to pass stringent Regents exams to get their high school diplomas, many schools are trying to get rid of those who may tarnish the schools' statistics," explain Tamar Lewin and Jennifer Medina of *The New York Times*, "many students are being counseled or forced to leave."

Body Count

The U.S. Border Patrol plays a similar game. Its statistics for the number of illegal immigrants who died trying to cross the desert along the U.S.-Mexico border are misleadingly low, reports Claudine LoMonaco of the *Tucson Citizen*, because they include only those who die in the counties actually on the border. Those who manage to keep breathing as they stagger beyond the border counties are not counted. The 19 bodies found in that trailer in Victoria, Texas, do not appear in Border Patrol sta-

BOMBS ON AIRLINES

Since the Transportation Security Administration asked that luggage be left unlocked so that its contents could be inspected, more than 6,700 passengers have filed complaints. "Most of the complaints covered damaged or stolen items," reports *The Washington Post*'s Sara Kehaulani Goo. A $1,000 pair of binoculars was taken from John Latta's bag. The rap star Lil' Kim reported jewelry valued at $250,000 was missing from hers. I am, of course, concerned about the plight of Ms. Kim and Mr. Latta. But what worries more is that putting something in the bag is just as easy for a bad guy to do as taking something out. And that something could be a small explosive device similar to the one that brought down Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

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tistics because Victoria is not in a border county.

The O'Reilly Factor

Joe Lieberman calls the Democratic candidates who oppose the war in Iraq "extremists." It seems to me that the real extremists are the top officials of the Bush administration who repeatedly exaggerated the need for the war to the point of outright lying, and the legislators like Lieberman who aided and abetted them. Speaking of extremists, what about the administration's running dogs at Fox News? Consider this from Bill O'Reilly's broadcast of March 26: "You flatten Baghdad, you flatten the troops, we flatten all the troops. And you know as well as I do the war would have been over in two days. It's just frustrating for everybody to know that we have been fighting this war with one hand behind our back."

Flawed Foundations

Still another example of the uses of definition comes from the world of foundations. Foundations are required to dispose of at least 5 percent of their assets each year. The idea is that they should make at least some charitable or educational use of their money. The foundations, however, apply the Art of Redefinition and count salaries, trustees fees, legal and accounting fees, rent and office expenses as part of the 5 percent. Needless to say, the salaries and fees represent a tempting opportunity for the people who run the foundations to enrich themselves at the expense of their supposed beneficiaries. When Congress proposes reform to prevent abuse, foundation officials moan that they will have to cut back on essentials such as auditing and annual reporting to their donors. "There has been no mention, however," notes Stephanie Strom of *The New York Times*, "of cutting compensation for trustees and executives." The median salary for executives of non-profits with assets of more than $25 million is $176,000. At New York's Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, reports Strom, even the trustees were each paid $175,000 in 2001, the latest year for which figures are available.

Clever bureaucrats, when confronted with a potentially embarrassing statistic, know that they should never abandon hope. Instead, they redefine whatever they are quantifying so that the bad news is either mitigated or disappears.

The Valenti Influence

It used to be that lobbyists were people who wished they were in the Congress or the White House, but had to take up lobbying because their side had lost an election. That began to change in the 90s. Steven Waldman, one of our alumni, was the first to notice that congressional staff members were devoting a lot of their time to angling for lobbying jobs. Now comes another *Monthly* alumnus, *Slate*'s Timothy Noah, who reports that members themselves are getting into the act.

Recently, at a retirement party for the prominent lobbyist Hilary Rosen, Reps. Billy Tauzin and Mary Bono sang "Who wants the job of Hilary Rosen? How about the team of Bono and Tauzin?" What's happened, I suspect, is that today's public officials look at a Jack Valenti, who since leaving the Johnson White House has been the Washington lobbyist for the Motion Picture Association. His role has enabled him to maintain his status as a player on the Washington scene for 36 years. He doesn't have to raise money and run for reelection and he earns a salary in the neighborhood of $1 million.

Fleecing the Candidates

Reformers like Paul Taylor have been trying to get broadcasters to honor their public service obligation by contributing at least some free time to political candidates. After all, it is the public that gives the radio and TV stations the license to use the airwaves, so they should do something in return. The broadcasters have responded to this seemingly reasonable position with massive resistance. Now comes the news that not only are they refusing to give free time, they are also actually charging candidates more than year-round advertisers. They raise their rates by more than 50 percent in the weeks before the election. Last year, in the period from Aug. 26 to Nov. 4, according to the Alliance for Better Campaigns, rates rose 53 percent.

Prescribing Privilege

Sen. Mark Dayton is making Washington officialdom nervous. He has slipped an amendment into the Senate's prescription drug bill that would cut drug coverage under the congressional health plan to the level Congress provides for the public. Bureaucrats from the White House down through the ranks of the civil service are worried that they too might be affected. What would happen if the public ever found out about the generous health benefits federal officials enjoy? Would the people demand the same coverage for themselves, or will the Dayton amendment mean a reduction in the feds' goodies?

There is a difference between the two sets of benefits.

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On drugs, under the most popular federal plan, the congressman or other federal official pays only 25 percent of the cost. There's no deductible, and the official pays nothing at all after the total reaches $4,000. Under the Senate's plan for the people, each person must first pay a $275 deductible, then 50 percent of the cost of the prescription. Once their costs reach $2,000, the people pay 100 percent until the bill is $4,000. Then their drug coverage kicks back in until the total cost reaches $4,900. Here, at last, their benefits become equal to the senator's.

The House bill does not contain the Dayton amendment, and it appears likely to be killed in conference. The House has already passed a bill to protect federal retirees from having their benefits reduced to the proposed Medicare level. "We take care of our own, and the hell with the average American," says Rep. Fortney Stark. (You can see why the Republicans called the Capitol Police to shut this guy up.)

There are, however, a few signs that word is leaking out to the general public. I saw a good piece explaining what's going on by the *Hearst News Service*'s Judy Holland in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. And on Aug. 4th, Nora O'Donnell laid it all out on NBC News.

Diplomatic Courage

When Brady Kiesling, a veteran foreign service officer, was planning to resign in protest over the war in Iraq, his friend, former ambassador Robert Keeley, told him it wouldn't do any good, people would forget what he had done.

I happen to know Bob Keeley, and am sure that he hopes he was wrong. Brady Kiesling deserves to be remembered as a brave and thoughtful public servant, as do Ann Wright and John Brown, the other foreign service officers who joined him in resigning in protest. It isn't easy to abandon a career. Asked to describe Brady, his sister Jennie said simply, "He's a diplomat," writes Bob Thompson of *The Washington Post Magazine*. A diplomat no longer, Kiesling is getting his Ph.D. and hopes to teach. We wish him well.

The Editor as Reporter

Brady Kiesling represents a good side of the foreign service: the high quality of the people it attracts. A less happy side, how their abilities are often wasted on triviality, was told by Bill Keller, the new executive editor of *The New York Times*, in an article that appeared in the November 1979 issue of this magazine. A few years ago, I was selecting the best articles about government that had appeared in the *Monthly*. One I chose was Keller's foreign service piece. It will be posted on our Web site during this month.

Another article Keller wrote for the *Monthly* told a truth about Washington that still holds today. Titled "Lowest Common Denominator Lobbying" (May 1983), it describes how Washington lobbyists are prisoners of the worst elements of the group they represent, the loudmouths who can make trouble for them at the group's next convention unless they toe the extremist line. Sometimes the lobbyists become willing prisoners. Faced with a shortage of contributions from their members, they will stir up the crazies with messages like: "Bulletin to Members: We are faced with a great danger of another attack by the liberals. Help stop Hillary. Send your contribution today."

My Brother's Keeper

As many have learned to their regret, you have to watch which key to press when sending email. The latest example comes from former Sen. Tim Hutchinson, who is now a Washington lobbyist. It seems that he wanted to let two officials at the Department of Homeland Security know that a client of his would be meeting with Asa Hutchinson, one of the department's top honchos, who happens to be the former senator's brother. Alas, the former senator hit the wrong key and the message was dispatched to 70 other Washington lobbyists, some of whom were less than delighted to learn that a competitor had this fraternal advantage over them.

Unsurprisingly, the message was leaked to Juliet Eilperin of *The Washington Post*, who called the brothers and asked for an explanation. Tim Hutchinson assured her that he did not lobby his brother. Asa Hutchinson said "I have recused myself from any decision-making on any of my brother's clients." Why then this meeting between Tim Hutchinson's client and Asa Hutchinson? "For social and friendship purposes," said Asa.

Blocked Arteries

The latest bulletin from that most farcical of public institutions, the government of the District of Columbia: District emergency medical services save the lives of 4 percent of Washingtonians who suffer cardiac arrest. In Seattle, the figure is 45 percent, according to Matthew Cella of *The Washington Times*. In April, he adds, "the number of critical medical calls reached within 8 minutes by district personnel was 55 percent; the national average is 90 percent." If you're planning to come to Washington, you might want to consult your cardiologist before you call your travel agent. If you're planning to arrive at Reagan National Airport, bring your own defibrillator. ◆

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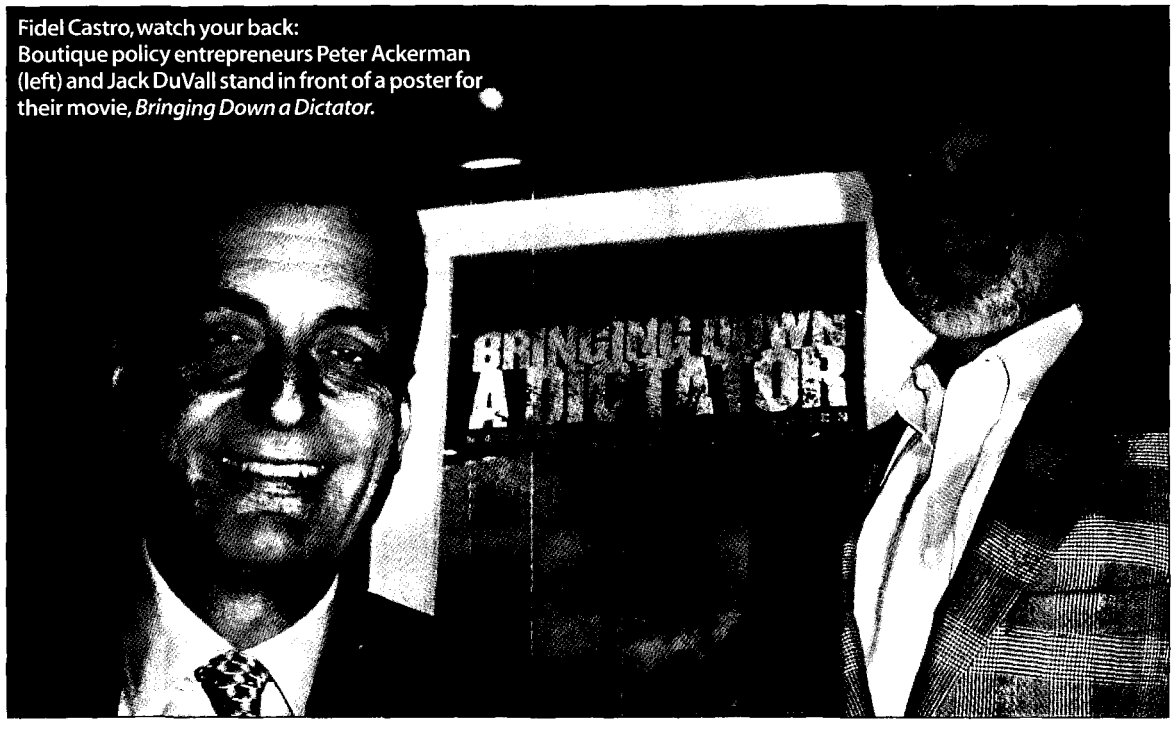
10 MILES SQUARE

"...such district (not exceeding ten miles square)...[shall] become the seat of the government of the United States."
—THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES



Fidel Castro, watch your back: Boutique policy entrepreneurs Peter Ackerman (left) and Jack DuVall stand in front of a poster for their movie, *Bringing Down a Dictator.*

Photograph by Brent Kendall

The New Velvet Revolutionaries

Agitating for kinder, gentler regime change.

By Eli J. Lake

If you want America to invade your country, call the Pentagon. If you want to start a small guerrilla war, turn to the CIA. But if you need some advice on how to bring down an authoritarian foreign government without firing a shot, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) is the place to go.

Located on the 7th floor of a skyscraper in downtown Washington (I have been asked, for security reasons, not to disclose the precise coordinates), the center is a small, privately funded undertaking with a big aim: to promote a set of rebellion strategies, from mass strikes to clever graffiti, that successful dissidents have used to topple tyrannical regimes. Founded in January 2002, the group has already arranged strategic training and provided other non-financial assistance to Iraqi Kurds and expatriates (before the U.S. invasion) and to Venezuelans working against the Hugo Chávez government, and supplied

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training materials to Iranian oppositionists. The group is now gaining notice from both neoconservatives and liberals, and its ideas are beginning to receive attention within the Bush administration.

The center represents the latest version of a kind of venture that has long thrived in D.C.: The boutique nonprofit policy organization. From the liberal-left consumer groups which Ralph Nader created in the 1970s, clustered today among the few unrenovated buildings still left around Dupont Circle, to the more upscale outfits launched by conservatives like Grover Norquist in the 1980s and 1990s, Washington tends to attract policy entrepreneurs who dream not of making billions but of altering the course of history.

The ICNC fits the pattern, even as it confounds ideological labels. Its founder is Peter Ackerman, a lanky 56-year-old with gray temples and a passing resemblance to Alan Alda. A Ph.D. turned finance whiz, Ackerman spent the late 1970s and 1980s at Drexel Burnham Lambert's Los Angeles office working with his colleague Michael Milken on popularizing junk bonds. Not surprisingly, the center's offices look less like a scruffy, underfunded human rights organization than a successful hedge fund, with new computers sporting flat-screen monitors and a gourmet coffee machine in the kitchen. Indeed, the office doubles as Ackerman's investment firm. "I think one of the reasons I get a lot of my phone calls answered is because people think I'm a financier," muses Ackerman.

In the early 1990s, he decided to pursue his true passion, the subject of the doctoral thesis he'd completed two decades before: nonviolent political change. At Harvard, Ackerman's mentor and thesis advisor had been Gene Sharp, an iconoclastic thinker and author of *The Politics of Non-Violent Action*. That book was the first to attempt a systematic review of the best practices from nonviolent insurrections of the past, from Jesus to Gandhi, with chapters devoted to such topics as "Taunting High Officials" and "Protest Disrobings." Sharp went on to become something of a cult favorite among dissidents. He consulted with student leaders in China during the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, and his book was used as a blueprint by the Serbian opposition movement Otpor that brought down Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000.

That latter uprising was especially important because it received vital support from the U.S. government—Clinton's Secretary of State Madeline Albright arranged for Otpor leaders to be trained and funded out of the American Embassy in Budapest. Shortly after, Ackerman and his producing partner Jack DuVall were in Serbia making a documentary about Otpor with filmmaker Steve York. Dissidents from around the world now traipse through the center's offices to see the film, *Bringing Down a Dictator*, which has been translated into several languages, significantly including Spanish, Farsi, and Chinese. (The documentary's promotional posters bear the tag line "Coming to a repressive regime near you" and boast of the film's narrator, Martin Sheen.) Demonstrators arrested in Cuba last spring had copies of the video on them.

Ackerman is no pacifist. "I'm not against the use of military options in certain circumstances," he explained to me. Nor is he with those, like former president Jimmy Carter, who believe in reconciling with even the harshest governments to prevent bloodshed. Rather, he's a regime-changer, but one who breaks, for pragmatic reasons, with the neocons' focus on invading countries and fomenting violent coups.

TIDBITS& OUTRAGES

Hedging his bets.
Morals maven William Bennett announced that since September 11, he has re-evaluated American culture and "come to the conclusion that we're not ready to go down the tubes."

Outliving the critics.
In another testimonial to the amazing span of Bob Hope's career, *The New York Times* reported his death with an obituary by longtime *Times* movie critic Vincent Canby. Canby had passed away three years earlier, but the *Times* had prepared the piece several years in advance.

A case of divided self.
A clerk in the East Longmeadow, Mass., municipal office found her own name forged on a local candidate's election petition. Immediately after Laurie Raimer's name came that of her brother, James, who's lived in Florida for the last 12 years.

Crotch stuffing not included.
Toy company BBI has created a George W. Bush Aviator Action Figure, complete with naval aviator suit, sold at KB Toy Stores for $39.99.

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"Violent insurrection is a very high-risk proposition," he told me. "It is costly to the public and has a low chance of success." If marshalled prudently, Ackerman believes that the activist's arsenal of boycotts, protests, sit-ins, and strikes can persuade a dictator's police, civil service, and military to disobey him and side with the people, accomplishing the objective of most military campaigns without firing a shot. The center is even developing a computer game wherein players assume the role of opposition leader in a repressive country. One staffer described it as "Sim Revolution"; they hope to make it available on the Internet. Ackerman assures me the game will "change the world."

When I stopped by the center's offices in July, Ackerman was chatting with a trainer about an upcoming seminar planned for Palestinians in Bethlehem and Ramallah. The trainer's contacts had relayed to him the mood of the Palestinian street: They were wary of a cease-fire and not too happy with new Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas. This was good news for Ackerman, because it meant they might be open to his muscular brand of direct action. "There are a lot of tent-posts on the ground already," noted the trainer, who asked not be identified. But those tent-posts, including one called Search for Common Ground—which brings small groups of Israelis and Palestinians together for heart-to-heart discussions—were all focused on "mediation and reconciliation"—not a strategy that matched the mood of the street. The Palestinians, he worried, were growing disenchanted with the feel-good mediators to the point that they were beginning to wonder which side they were on. Taking it all in, Ackerman concludes with a grin that this makes for a good opportunity for strategic nonviolent action: "Maybe it's better that they don't talk for a while. Now's the time for them to push."

Now the Bush administration, having committed half of the Army's combat forces to an occupation of Iraq but still interested in changing a regime or three, is starting to see the wisdom of the ideas Ackerman promotes. As Lorne Craner, the current Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, but at the time president of the International Republican Institute, said in an interview, "Our experience in Serbia, including our efforts working with those advocating nonviolent resistance, added to the repertoire of the possibilities that fall between doing nothing and going to war."

And this is exactly what the Bush administration's hawks are advocating for Iran. Since last spring, the Pentagon's civilian leaders introduced a plan to provide material and money to segments of the growing Iranian democracy movement, focusing on the kind of non-lethal support—digital cameras, and text pagers for example—popular movements need to become better organized. Ackerman has since made tapes of *Bringing Down a Dictator* available to California-based satellite television stations broadcasting into Iran. And in a recent interview, Pentagon adviser Richard Perle said that, during meetings he has had with German officials, he made the following proposition: "If you want reconciliation with the United States, a good place to start would be a common policy supporting democracy in Iran."

Eli J. Lake is the State Department correspondent for United Press International.

Head-hunting for Michael Powell

Finding great jobs for political losers.

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

This summer has not exactly been Michael K. Powell's shining season. The 39-year-old chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (and son of the secretary of state) had spent much of the last two years pushing a rule change to loosen restrictions on the number of television stations that media conglomerates can own. Powell jammed the change through the commission on a party-line vote with the same cocky assurance that characterizes so many pro-industry Bush initiatives. But he failed to foresee the firestorm of public outrage that ensued. Hundreds of thousands of citizens complained to the FCC. Interest groups from the National Organization for Women to the National Rifle Association demanded a congressional override. Spooked lawmakers complied; the House voted to cancel the change this June by the nearly Soviet margin of 400-21.

All of this inspired a good deal of snark among the Washington media. In the tightly controlled Washington of George W. Bush, where a burnt piece of melba toast would stand a good chance of getting a federal judge-

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ship if Karl Rove willed it, managing to win only 21 Republican votes for a measure with the White House visibly behind it seemed a pretty cut-and-dry case of political malpractice. It had reporters and columnists speculating about whether this would cost Powell his job or, worse, his career.

If history is any guide, it probably won't. Washington is a city for second acts. Michael Deaver, Reagan's deputy chief of staff, hospitalized for depression after he was accused of selling access to lobbyists, rebounded to a vastly successful career as a political strategist. G. Gordon Liddy, the Nixon administration heavy who oversaw the Watergate break-in, earned millions as a lobbyist in the early 1980s before finding an audience on talk radio. And Bob Packwood, who resigned from the Senate after the publication of his sexually graphic diaries made him a Capitol laughingstock, turned himself into a well-heeled political consultant.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there's a small industry in D.C. devoted to helping ex-administration officials land lucrative lobbying jobs. To get a sense of Powell's post-government marketability, I paid a visit to a titan of that industry, Nels Olson.

Olson is the managing director of Korn/Ferry International, and, as such, probably Washington's leading corporate headhunter for high-level government officials bound for private practice. In late July, for example, he helped the Recording Industry Association of America hire Mitch Bainwol, a former chief of staff to Senate majority leader Bill Frist and chief strategist for the Republican National Committee, as its new executive director.

Olson works on the top floor of an eight-story Foggy Bottom office building which looks pretty much like every other building around it: the big windows, the clean brick exterior. His office itself is establishment with a capital E: It's decorated with two framed drawings of nautical knots and a mounted wooden model of a sailboat's hull. There's a pervasive solicitousness in the office that any anxious ex-official would find deeply comforting: During the five minutes I spent waiting for Olson to get off the phone, happily reading the offered *Wall Street Journal*, three different staffers asked me if I'd like something to drink.

I asked Olson—a neat, intense man in his late 30s, who wears black loafers with no socks—what advice he would give to Powell. Olson gave a small smile: Powell still has it made.

"This is a town where people have their ups and downs, but it's frequently only a matter of having some time pass," Olson observed.

He'd coach Powell to stress "his law career, his breadth of government service, the things he did before he took over as FCC chairman." Olson would suggest starting with law firms, which tend to care more about a potential partner's profile than his political popularity. But there could also be a place for Powell at an industry group, he thought.

The real lesson, Olson insisted, is that Powell can't go wrong. "In the long run, for someone for his ilk and stature … " Olson paused, "How should I put this? I'd still view him as a very attractive candidate."

Benjamin Wallace-Wells is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Patrick Lakamp and James Heaney

"Failed Empire"
The Buffalo News, June 8-11, 2003

In a four-part series, Patrick Lakamp and James Heaney document, in impressive detail, the breakdown of former Congessman Jack Kemp's dream of economic enterprise zones in Kemp's hometown of Buffalo and elsewhere. The tax breaks are still massive, but because of backroom political deal-making, the city "is using its richest development package to provide tax breaks to some of the city's biggest corporations and most influential business executives," and, after a decade and a half, with a pricetag to taxpayers of $200 million each year, the project has lured no new businesses to Buffalo and created virtually no new jobs for working-class Buffalonians. But Heaney and Lakamp, in riveting detail, reach out beyond their hometown, and show how enterprise zones across the country have been comparable failures, devolving into tax giveaway programs for politically connected firms with no attached promises of new jobs.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence of solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com. Nominations for stories run in August are due September 5, 2003.

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WHO'S WHO

Having decided against a 2004 presidential bid, once-and-future candidate **Gary Hart** is preparing to throw his hat in the ring for another campaign: his old U.S. Senate seat in Colorado. Why would the 66-year-old reenter the political arena when he's already passed up the big prize? Hart reportedly believes that he can provide much-needed expertise on national security—he co-chaired the U.S. Commission on National Security that issued a warning about terrorist attacks in January, 2001. When asked to confirm or deny his candidacy, Hart responded, "No comment."

In Washington, geographic proximity to power is a measure of power itself. So perhaps it's simply a sign of the times that **Brent Scowcroft**, chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board—and national security adviser under **Bush I**—has been moved from his office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, across the driveway from the West Wing, to digs in the New Executive Office Building (NEOB), a block farther away. The reason for the downgrade is not hard to understand. Scowcroft openly objected to the Bush administration's go-it-alone strategy on Iraq, most famously in an August 2002 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed. But perhaps he is getting his revenge for the office slight. The *Los Angeles Times* reports that Scowcroft's office has begun its own investigation into the process by which false intelligence claims about Iraq's nuclear weapons program found their way into President Bush's State of the Union address.

If and when Congress launches its own investigation into these claims, you can be sure that subpoenas will go to those who participated in the White House Iraq Group. WHIG, as it is known, was formed by White House Chief of Staff **Andy Card** in August 2001 to help "educat[e] the public" about Iraq's threat, as *The Washington Post*'s **Barton Gellman** and **Walter Pincus** reported in an exhaustive article this summer. The members of this group included communications aides **Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin**, and **James R. Wilkinson**; legislative liaison **Nicholas E. Calio**; National Security Advisor **Condoleezza Rice** and her deputy, **Stephen J. Hadley**; plus **I. Lewis Libby**, Cheney's chief of staff. Another group of aides who might wish to start shopping for attorneys includes the team of analysts who reported to WHIG. These folks—**Will Tobey** and **Susan Cook**, working under the NSC's senior director for counterproliferation, **Robert Joseph**—were asked to come up with examples and language that would illustrate the threat posed by Iraq more vividly than did the National Intelligence Estimate. An unpublished final draft of a white paper they produced includes what the *Post* describes as some of the first known instances of dubious statements that later made it into public speeches by President Bush and other senior administration officials, including Bush's claim that Iraq sought so-called "yellowcake" uranium from Africa. One reason the paper was never published: Rice and Joseph both felt it "was not strong enough," according to Wilkinson.

Another person whose name certainly deserves to be better known is Pentagon official **Harold Rhode**. When we first met Rhode, in the early days of the Bush administration, he was the "Islamic affairs advisor" to Deputy Secretary of Defense **Paul Wolfowitz** who got into some trouble for poking Saudi diplomat **Adel al Jubeir** in the chest during an argument. Rhode later landed on his feet in Undersecretary of Defense **Douglas Feith**'s Office of Special Plans, the Pentagon's in-house intelligence shop charged with uncovering sundry links between **Saddam Hussein** and **Osama bin Laden**. Rhode got another big break when Pentagon hawks sent him to Baghdad this spring as their chief liaison (read: handler) to Iraqi National Congress chief **Ahmed Chalabi**, the hawks' favorite exile. But problems cropped up there, too, when, during his stay at the occupation headquarters in Baghdad, Rhode quickly alienated most of the American military and civilian pros in the country by saying all manner of unfortunate things about Arabs, Iranians, and Muslims in general. Later he holed himself up with Chalabi at the latter's hunt-club headquarters and bombarded Washington with faxes about plans to install Chalabi as the **George Washington** of Iraq. Following his subsequent recall—not so voluntarily, we hear—Rhode showed up sitting next to Chalabi in the front row at Vice President **Dick Cheney**'s rally-the-neocon-troops speech at the American Enterprise Institute in July. Most recently, Rhode made the news again for a series of meetings he held in August with one of the most colorful characters from Washington's last

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major foreign policy scandal: exiled Iranian arms merchant **Manucher Ghorbanifar**, of Iran-Contra fame. But with certain journalists and congressional investigators starting to dig, we think we may be hearing more about Rhode very soon.

It's no secret that a number of conservatives, **Newt Gingrich** chief among them, are trying to drive **Colin Powell** out of the State Department and install one of their own, on the grounds that Powell has totally mismanaged the department. But the irony is that if Powell goes, State will also almost surely lose his close ally, Undersecretary of State for management **Grant Green**, the man who is widely credited with superb and long-overdue improvements in the department, from replacing antiquated computer equipment to reversing State's decline in recruiting. Green, a former colleague from Powell's Pentagon days, literally walked through the doors of the State Department with Powell on the secretary's first day in office. Green has also been included in the daily senior-staff meeting with Powell and senior aides **Richard Armitage, Mark Grossman**, and **Larry Wilkerson**—a sign of how much emphasis Powell places on management of the department.

Republicans have been salivating over the Georgia Senate seat up for grabs in 2004 ever since quasi-Democrat **Zell Miller** announced that he would not run for reelection. Now Democrats are giving them even more cause for hope. **Andrew Young**—former mayor of Atlanta and ambassador to the United Nations—has indicated he intends to run for the position. But the 71-year-old says he won't advertise, use polls, or listen to consultants. Party insiders, who had been recruiting former Georgia Senator **Sam Nunn**'s daughter, **Michelle Nunn**, to enter the race are exasperated with Young's old-time approach to campaigning. But they're even more frustrated that Nunn, the 36-year-old founder and director of a popular volunteerism program in Atlanta, has vowed not to run as long as Young remains in the campaign.

Speaking of Douglas Feith: Has he lost some of the confidence of his boss, **Donald Rumsfeld**? Feith, the undersecretary of defense for policy, was recently deprived of a key piece of bureaucratic turf: the aforementioned Office of Special Plans, responsibility for which has been shifted to **Stephen A. Cambone**, now the Pentagon's first undersecretary of defense for intelligence.

Former U.S. Senator Gary Hart/Art by Taylor Jones

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General Election

Insiders say it's too late for Wesley Clark to win the primaries. They're wrong.

By Amy Sullivan

The script for the 2004 Democratic primary has not worked out as written. By this time, with nine candidates in the running—representing various wings of the party and several regions of the country—one or two were supposed to have caught fire. But so far, after a half-dozen cattle calls, a full round of "Meet the Press" appearances, and an untold number of pancake breakfasts, there is no real frontrunner. The early favorites, like Joe Lieberman and John Edwards, are struggling. John Kerry has raised money, but not hopes or excitement. The one guy who has surged ahead, Howard Dean, is widely seen as, in Texas-speak, snakebit. He was adamantly against the war in Iraq, which 62 percent of the country still supports, and while he is no dove—he says he supported every post-Vietnam U.S. intervention through Kosovo—he lacks national security experience. Leading Democrats are increasingly worried that he just can't beat Bush next year. And so are voters.

Instead of coalescing around one or two strong possibilities, likely voters are withdrawing their support. Today, there are actually more undecided Democrats than there were just a few months ago. The number stood at 15 percent in May and 30 percent in early July. In a late July Zogby poll, almost half of those Democrats polled—48 percent—said they wish they had other candidates to choose from.

Democrats want somebody else to run. And that somebody could be Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO and current undeclared candidate for the Democratic nomination, who has assured supporters that he will announce his intentions sometime this month.

Clark's appeal is obvious. Although he has yet to declare a party affiliation, his stance on key domestic issues—he's pro-choice, pro-affirmative action, and pro-progressive taxation—clearly mark him as a Democrat. And while other Democratic contenders either took strong positions last fall against the war in Iraq or declared themselves convinced by the administration's "evidence" that the threat was imminent and action was needed, Clark put forth an alternative strategy for how to deal with terrorism generally and Iraq specifically, based on using military alliances such as NATO, the model he made work in Kosovo. (See "An Army of One?" by Wesley Clark, September 2002). Prior to the Iraq invasion, he argued that military action would require international support to be sustainable, that fighting would continue after major military victories, and that while the case for war "could have been made," the "element of urgency was always missing." Although criticized shortly after the war began for these statements, Clark's positions have been borne out, while both Democratic candidates and the president have struggled to defend their earlier stances.

Though he's never held elected office, recent speeches have hinted at how Clark might employ his military experience as evidence of his capacity for domestic

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political leadership. Running large military enterprises, he likes to point out, requires providing services to tens of thousands of servicemen and women who, in the all-volunteer era, are free to quit. "We fought for better schools for the children of the men and women who served in Europe. We fought for better housing... for time off so people could be with their families... for better healthcare and health insurance," said Clark in a recent speech to the New Democrat Network in Washington, D.C., sounding very much like a former governor. Clark also seems to have a preternatural ability to phrase his positions in a way that sounds authentic while allowing him to navigate the most treacherous political minefields. When asked about gun control, for instance, Clark said, "I have got 20-some-odd guns in the house. I like to hunt. I have grown up with guns all my life. But people who like assault weapons, they should join the United States Army—we have them."

I wanna be like Ike.

Reuters/Evan Vucci

Arguably, Clark matches each of the strengths of the current crop of contenders, and then raises them one. His Army background—stretching from Vietnam to Kosovo—out-oomphs Kerry's military record. His service as commander of NATO forces compares favorably to Dean's executive experience as governor of a small New England state. He adds gravitas to Edwards's aesthetic appeal, charisma to Lieberman's thoughtfulness, and sincerity to Gephardt's liberal policies.

That's why more and more Democratic insiders are beginning to argue that—at least in theory—Clark is the best candidate to beat Bush in a general election. The problem, they say, is that it's too late for Clark to make a primary run. Campaigns and Elections 101 teaches that it takes time to acquire name recognition, to build a field organization, to raise the funds to be competitive, to gain endorsements, and to acquire the myriad of intangible skills that it takes to run a winning campaign.

But this time, the conventional wisdom may be wrong.

Getting To Know the General

One of the first rules of campaigning is to establish name recognition. Candidates don't pass out buttons and bumper stickers just for kicks, but because people don't vote for someone they've never heard of. Sure, Wes Clark was once Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, just like Dwight Eisenhower. But Ike won World War II and became a national hero. Clark won Kosovo, a small conflict that hardly captured America's attention. Nor, in terms of profile, does he compare to that other general in national life, Colin Powell. Indeed, in national polls, Clark has lower name recognition than the least-known candidate in the Democratic field, Dennis Kucinich.

But at the same time, his name I.D. isn't bad for a guy who isn't even in the race. Since May, a consistent 40 percent of New Hampshire poll respondents have said they're aware of him. While the nine different Democratic candidates have been competing with each other, the bully pulpit of the White House, and water-skiing squirrels on local news for media attention, Clark appeared on national television dozens of times during the war in Iraq—not as a candidate, but as a nonpartisan military expert for CNN. Those appearances have built credibility with the activists and involved voters who watch cable news.

Formally announcing his candidacy would give Clark an immediate boost. And he'd likely get another one from the press. Candidate Clark would be something entirely new in a mostly bland field, with the kind of backstory—a "credible," moderate, intellectual former general—over which reporters tend to swoon. If Clark can generate media interest the way Dean did for his

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fundraising prowess, he may not require months to build voter interest. "The news cycle is much faster these days, thanks to 24-hour cable, the Web, a metastasized pundit caste constantly searching for new angles, etc," argues *Slate*'s Mickey Kaus, dubbing this phenomenon the "Feiler Faster Thesis." "As a result, politics is able to move much faster, too, as our democracy learns to process more information in a shorter period and to process it comfortably at this faster pace." If Laci Peterson can become a household name overnight, it's hardly too late for Clark.

While voters wait much longer to engage in campaigns, once they do, they form opinions very quickly. Consequently a candidate without "it" can fail to generate name recognition regardless of the time spent on the national stage. John Edwards has been running for president for the past eight months (and has been an unofficial candidate for several years) and yet as recently as July, only 34 percent of likely Democratic voters had heard of him. Neither does familiarity necessarily breed popularity: Lieberman is by far the best-known Democratic candidate—a distinction that contributed to his early lead in New Hampshire polls—but his support has been dropping steadily as voters take a closer look at their options.

Chicken Donors

Clark's empty campaign account is a more significant hurdle. Kerry has wined and dined, gripped and grinned his way to $16 million in donations, but this has been over nine long months of raising money at the pace of $75,000 each day in increments no larger than $2,000. That's a heck of a lot of chicken dinners and bad jokes. It's also time that Clark simply doesn't have.

But he may not need it. While Democratic operatives like to opine that it's too late for other candidates to enter the race because most traditional donors have already been tapped, the evidence suggests otherwise. Most of the leading candidates are falling behind their fundraising targets. Edwards, in fact, came within $500,000 of his second-quarter goal only because of donations from 22 of his own campaign workers on the last day of the filing period. That suggests that a significant number of Democratic donors are holding back and surveying the crowded field for signs of a winner. So far, most of the heavy hitters either have not given money to any campaign or have parceled out modest donations among several different candidates. Some have even gone so far as to avoid opportunities to give to current candidates: One Democratic donor described how he arranged to be out of town rather than attend a fundraiser for a contender he finds less than compelling. The money to launch a candidate to frontrunner status exists; donors are simply waiting to be convinced.

Can Clark harness this financial potential in just a few short months? Not if he has to make the rounds, hat in hand, to gather $2,000 here and $2,000 there. Money, however, tends to follow money, like a snowball rolling down a hill. After winning the New Hampshire primary—and thus demonstrating his viability—in 2000, John McCain raised $3.7 million in three weeks from online donations alone. More recently, Howard Dean has demonstrated the potential for candidates to turn grassroots support into dollars via the Internet. Dean "has shown the incredible potential of low-donor Internet fundraising," says Democratic consultant Christian Sinderman. "Clark can replicate that." In fact, Clark's Internet presence is already second only to Dean. DraftWesleyClark.com raised over $300,000 in the space of three weeks in July and Brent Blackaby of Draft Clark 2004 says that they have raised enough money to open six or seven field offices. "It takes a lot of people to get to that amount, and that's without a candidate. This could be a core of people who are willing to give a small amount every quarter. And many of them have told us that they would give more money once Clark gets in the race." Significant grassroots support could allow Clark to get a rapid infusion of seed money—which would help convince the high rollers that he's for real.

Organization Man

The aspect of a Clark candidacy that evokes the most skepticism is the issue of field organization. Successful primary campaigns start months or years in advance, with dedicated campaign staff sent to each corner of Iowa and New Hampshire to learn the names of every precinct captain and local Rotary Club president. With nine candidates already in the race, conventional wisdom assumes that all the political talent and endorsements are already locked up, and that Clark would be forced to draw from the dregs to build an entire campaign organization from scratch.

This assumes, however, that all of the major candidates will stay in the race through the beginning of the primaries. It would only take Lieberman or Gephardt or Edwards dropping out for Clark to potentially inherit a seasoned, if hand-me-down, field structure and staff. Even if none of the candidates leave the race, some of their staff could leave them. Just as money follows money, talent follows potential. Some political operatives choose candidates based on personal loyalty; most want to work for a winner.

Endorsements work the same way. Clark volunteers have spent the summer lobbying key Democrats in more than 40 states to hold off on endorsements until Clark makes an announcement. In New Hampshire, a number of legislators have agreed to endorse Clark if he runs. But the most enthusiastic endorsements come from officeholders in states outside the traditional Democratic primary field. Matt Stoller, a former Kerry volunteer who now coordinates outreach for Draft Clark 2004, reports that "we're seeing a lot of interest in Clark from red-state Democrats who don't want to have to run 15 points ahead of the national party if Dean or Kerry is the standard-bearer." Several former Texas congressmen are also ready to lend their names to the Clark cause on the theory that the general

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would help local candidates in a year that is already shaping up to be a tough battle for Democrats in that state. Donna Brazile, Al Gore's former campaign manager, while frustrated with Clark's delayed membership in the Democratic Party, concedes that "Wesley Clark has what it takes. He would be a splash." And with that potential, Brazile insists, "He needs to get in the race. He's a very attractive candidate."

If Democratic Party leaders got it into their head that Clark was the best hope to beat Bush, there is much they could do to help the former general. They can provide him with endorsements, lend him organizational support, and direct campaign contributions his way.

Clark just might get the biggest endorsement of them all. In a June interview, former President Bill Clinton told the Associated Press that he has been impressed by every aspect of Clark's career and uttered these magic words: "I believe Wes, if he runs, would make a valuable contribution because he understands America's security challenges and domestic priorities. I believe he would make a good president." The statement has been judged by many political observers to be a non-endorsement endorsement, and a signal to Democratic donors and consultants to wait for Clark.

Most significantly, however, the conventional wisdom overlooks the field organization that has already developed in anticipation of Clark's candidacy. "We're taking the grassroots support," Blackaby says, "and putting some structure around it. Our objective is to have a functioning organization that Clark can immediately tap into and augment." Field coordinators are already in place in over 40 states, including such key targets as Iowa, South Carolina, California, and Florida. Nearly three dozen volunteers traveled to New Hampshire over the Fourth of July weekend to open the campaign's first field office; the national headquarters was launched in Little Rock at the beginning of August. Clark supporters are running radio and television ads in a number of states, and have set up political action committees. And while the letters encouraging Clark to run include many from those who describe themselves as previously apolitical or unaffiliated voters, the Clark organizers are not pie-in-the-sky dreamers who like to root for the underdog. In recent weeks, a veteran political correspondent and the DNC's former chief counsel have signed on to manage communications strategy and legal issues. Many in the effort to draft Clark come with experience on Clinton/Gore campaigns and some in the field, such as John Oeffinger who has organized Clark supporters in 10 Texas cities, have spent decades in the Democratic trenches. Clark could also draw on some untapped talent to organize his campaign—he has been in contact with John Weaver, the mastermind behind John McCain's breakaway campaign who was exiled from the Republican Party by Karl Rove and now works for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

The trump card of political wags is the increasingly front-loaded primary system. With Iowa and New Hampshire so quickly followed by polls in South Carolina, Arizona and now Michigan, Missouri, Washington, and elsewhere, the process gives a big boost to a candidate who does well early and makes it difficult for those who lag behind to ever catch up. And that would seem to bode well for the Gephardts and Deans who have been crisscrossing Iowa and New Hampshire to secure early votes.

But the front-loaded primaries have also created a do-or-die scenario—if a maverick places well in a few early primaries, momentum can shift in the blink of an eye, as it did for McCain in 2000—bringing with it attention from the press. It is entirely possible to peak too early in the campaign season; it can't be said that starting late automatically hurts a candidate's chances, particularly if he or she demonstrates real appeal.

All For One

Wes Clark is almost completely untested as a candidate. He has zero experience in the punishing, hand-squeezing, backslapping world of retail politics where most campaigns are won and lost. And Clark's months of teasing indecision have strained the patience and raised the doubts of even his most fervent admirers.

But if there's one thing that unites virtually all Democrats—from grassroots activists to elected officials—it's an overwhelming desire to unseat George W. Bush from the White House. More than any other time in the recent past, Democrats really want to win. And that sentiment can have a practical effect. Thus far, the party's establishment has not coalesced behind any one candidate. If party leaders got it into their head that Clark was the best hope to beat Bush, there is much they could do to help the former general. They can provide him with endorsements, lend him organizational support, and direct campaign contributions his way. And should the race remain tight as the convention approaches, party regulars—who, as so-called "superdelegates," comprise 37 percent of the convention vote—could also provide Clark with the margin he may need for victory.

Desperation, after all, imposes its own form of unity. Four years ago, angry and frustrated after eight years of a Democrat in the White House, once-bickering Republicans decided to cast their lot not with the senator whose "turn" it was or with the endearing maverick. They went with the guy who could win. Democrats may soon do the same. ◆

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Pro Choice

How Democrats can make vouchers their secret weapon.

By Siobhan Gorman

In early February, President Bush dropped a bombshell on the education world: A $75 million proposal for a multi-city voucher program, and Washington, D.C., would pioneer it. "My initial reaction was, 'No,'" says District Mayor Anthony Williams, a center-leaning Democrat. "But I started thinking: Why am I against this?" In his city, around 70 percent of fourth graders can't read or work math problems at grade level. And eighth graders are just as badly off. "I couldn't think of a lot of reasons why I was against it in D.C.," he recalled. With a school system in dire condition and rising demand for change, "you have got to have a compelling reason why you shouldn't try something new." So, he came out in support of the $15 million program that would give a $7,500 voucher to about 2000 poor D.C. children.

Williams is facing a problem with which nearly every Democratic urban mayor across the country struggles. Constituents are screaming for educational alternatives, and most of the options on the table have been exhausted, except, it seems, for one: vouchers. The Democratic Party has long opposed vouchers, more on political than policy grounds, but Williams's choice should sound a very loud alarm as the Democrats head into Election 2004. Democrats are on the verge of losing the rhetorical battle in the politics of hope.

Parents like Tracy Tucker of Washington, D.C., aren't supporting vouchers out of ideology but pragmatism; vouchers represent the hope for a better life for her two children. "I received a Pell Grant when I was in college," says Tucker, a black single mom who works part-time and makes about $25,000 a year. "I really see this as an extension of those programs to uplift children at an earlier age. Right now, I'm looking at the school system and what it's doing—it's like sending your child to prison."

Declared dead two years ago when Bush dropped a voucher component of his education reform bill to win its passage, vouchers are in resurgence. A year ago, the Supreme Court ruled that vouchers for private and religious schools do not violate the First Amendment. That eliminated a major hurdle for voucher advocates. Soon after, the Colorado Legislature passed a voucher proposal that goes into effect this month. Florida now has three voucher-type programs, and the decade-old Milwaukee voucher experiment is expanding.

Federal pilot programs like the one proposed for Washington, which Congress will take up as part of the budget battles this fall, offer a new route for voucher advocates. And discerning observers of the political scene can see the outlines of a key component of Bush's reelection strategy. Declaring education "the next civil right," Bush stole the education issue away from Democrats in 2000 by advocating tests as a way to measure the progress of schools and students in grades 3 through 8. Today he has pulled even with Democrats—45 percent to the Democrats' 46 percent—when voters are asked whom they trust more on education. And even as war and security dominate the headlines, come election time, education will matter "a lot," says Republican pollster David Winston. "There's been an increase in the number of issues voters are following, but I don't think there's been a decrease in concern about education." Democratic pollster Celinda Lake agrees, noting that education will follow closely behind the economy as a key issue in voters' minds. As 2004 approaches, Bush will argue that the federal government must give parents "more options," chiefly by offering vouchers for the kids who need them most. It could prove to be brilliant politics, putting the Democrats on the defensive on what used to be their strongest issue and breeding discontent among African-American voters, a key Democratic constituency.

Democrats are in this position for two reasons. First, there is a deep (and not completely unreasonable) resistance among key Democratic constituencies to the idea that private school vouchers are the real answer to underperforming urban schools. But second, those same constituencies have failed to come up with serious alternatives to vouchers (other than the perennial demand for more money). "The Democ-

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rats better have something to say in response beyond the same tired ideas we've been talking about for the last few years," warns Andrew J. Rotherham, who runs the education policy shop at the New Democrat Progressive Policy Institute. But Rotherham and others believe that there is a way out. With a couple of key policy tweaks, the Democrats could turn vouchers into their own issue in a way that would be more likely to help families like Tucker's while at the same time sowing disarray within Bush's conservative, pro-voucher base. For too long, vouchers have been a way for conservatives to shrink public education. Liberals can turn them into a way to expand it.

The Rising Tide

While founding father Thomas Paine was the nation's first school-choice advocate, the modern notion of vouchers was the brainchild of economist Milton Friedman, who first introduced the idea in 1955 as a way to end the government monopoly on education. For years, its appeal was limited to middle-class white families eager to get their children out of newly-integrated public schools. There was little momentum behind vouchers until discontent over the American public education system erupted in the wake of the 1983 report "A Nation at Risk," produced by the Reagan administration. Shortly thereafter, the free market-oriented Bradley Foundation, began funding two conservative scholars named Terry Moe and John Chubb to produce a book titled *Politics, Markets and America's Schools*, which argued that the root cause of public education's failures was bloated bureaucracy. Their solution: Give vouchers to poor children. Moe and Chubb's argument inverted the politics of vouchers. Suddenly liberals were forced into the position of arguing that poor black kids in Harlem should be denied the opportunities available to wealthy white kids on the Upper East Side.

Modern vouchers took root in Milwaukee, which in 1991 launched the first voucher program aimed explicitly at lower-income families. The city of Cleveland and the state of Florida followed later in the decade. All three programs enjoyed strong grassroots support from poor, black, mostly urban families. But at the federal level, President Clinton managed to skirt the issue, preventing a split between the teachers' unions and Democratic centrists. Instead of vouchers, Clinton introduced two new ideas. The first was accountability. As governor of Arkansas, Clinton had begun to enact regulations that specified what students should be required to know at each grade level and instituted a standard curriculum to match. In 1994, Clinton successfully enacted such standards at the federal level. This, too, was politically savvy. Republicans protested that the policy represented an encroachment of the federal bureaucracy, leaving Clinton as the defender of tough academic standards for all. "With hard work and high hopes, high expectations, you can go as far as your abilities will take you," was his frequent refrain. In 1996, only 16 states had measurable standards in place. By 2000, 49 states did.

Clinton also relieved pressure for vouchers with a second idea: federal support for charter schools. Charter schools are public schools, open to all students, started by outside groups (universities, non-profits, etc.) that are given relative independence from district regulations. Charter schools introduced the notion of "educational choice," but within the bounds of the public school system. The unions objected, but not too loudly, and with federal funding, the number of charter schools grew from one in 1992 to 2,000 by the end of the decade. In 1999, Clinton tried to go one step further by mandating that the states begin giving tests to see whether children were learning the proper skills. Republicans, realizing that their inattention to education policy had become a form of political suicide, blocked Clinton's bill, keeping the issue alive for the 2000 elections.

During that year's campaign, Bush—who as governor of Texas had also experimented with testing and standards—co-opted accountability under the banner of "compassionate conservatism." While in 1996, only 16 percent of voters trusted Republican Bob Dole more than President Clinton on education reform, Democratic candidate Al Gore had only a four-point advantage over Bush in 2000. Using education to build up his centrist credentials, Bush negated a major Democratic issue, contributing to his election victory. Today, nearly 60 percent of voters view Bush favorably on education, and he polls higher among African-American voters than his Republican counterparts in Congress do. Once in office, he made good on his election promise by implementing standards and accountability at the federal level via 2001's No Child Left Behind Act. When he highlights his domestic agenda in Campaign 2004, Bush will undoubtedly do a victory lap around his testing program and, if he's smart, push vouchers as the next logical step. Democrats will immediately be on the defensive—as supporters of the status quo against the wishes of single black moms who want a better life for their children.

Indeed, the No Child Left Behind Act is quietly building up grassroots support for vouchers. In addition to tests, the law requires states to designate which schools aren't performing well now, and incrementally give them a kick in the pants. Those schools that can't do better eventually get shut down, and the students who attend them are sent to other public schools. But as it happens, there aren't nearly enough slots in well-performing schools to accommodate all the students who are likely to be looking for a new classroom sometime in the next few years. (See Alexander Russo, "When School Choice Isn't," September 2002.) As school districts look around for places to put their students, they may find that private and parochial schools are among the few alternatives. Says Nina Rees, the deputy undersecretary of education who is responsible for the D.C. voucher initiative, "you have in effect created a constituency that could conceivably ask for private choice."

Of course, just because parents may want them doesn't necessarily mean that vouchers can deliver on the higher-quality education parents are looking for. Indeed, studies that have attempted to assess the educational attainment of children who take part in of existing voucher programs are, at this point, inconclusive. The most favorable assessments report significant but modest gains of 6 percentage points in read-

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ing and 11 points in math after students have spent three years in a voucher program, says Georgetown University public policy professor Patrick Wolf, a leading expert on voucher research. But other studies, he notes, "find no clear effect." About the best that can be currently said for vouchers is that, according to most surveys, parents who choose the voucher route are 20 to 30 percent happier than their public school counterparts.

Another argument usually made for vouchers is that they create competitive pressures that force traditional public schools to improve in order to retain students. Here, too, the evidence is promising but thin. After a decade of competing with a local voucher program, students in the Milwaukee public schools are performing better than they were a decade ago, but still only 63 percent of third-grade students are reading at or above grade level and the gap between white and minority test scores has been growing. Harvard economist Caroline Minter Hoxby has found that in schools where two-thirds of the students are eligible for vouchers, test scores rise faster than their voucher-free counterparts. Still, no researcher has determined how much of the gains are due to competition versus reforms that would have happened anyway.

But if the best available studies have yet to confirm the greatest claims of voucher proponents, they have certainly not validated the worst fears of voucher opponents. Vouchers clearly don't amount to a nuclear assault on the public schools. The Milwaukee public schools are alive and well, and their test scores have improved, not declined.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to knowing whether vouchers improve learning, and insuring that they in fact do, is that private schools operate, by definition, outside the reach of the accountability mechanisms of public schools. Parents who put their children in well-regarded parochial schools may well be making a wise choice. But there's no way to know for sure because such schools aren't required to test the performance of their students—certainly not in ways that allow for apples-to-apples comparisons with public schools. Moreover, there are plenty of private schools for low-income students whose educational rigor is deeply suspect. Last year in Pensacola, Fla., voucher entrepreneur Art Rocker, who opened six schools for special education voucher recipients, gave up four of the six schools after he faced allegations from angry parents and teachers that he was pocketing state money and failing to provide students with textbooks and food.

The number of bad private schools will likely skyrocket if vouchers become more widely available on the conservative model—that is, with no strings attached to the private institutions that receive them. As more and more students flee inner city public schools with vouchers in hand, incompetent or unscrupulous "educators" can be expected to open up any number of private "schools" to take advantage of the new market.

The clearest indication that this will happen is the experience with charter schools. According to a George Washington University study, Wash-

Labor Pain

Teachers' unions are the most vocal and powerful Democratic constituency opposing vouchers. Their almost unparalleled ability to raise funds and get out the vote insures that no Democratic candidate can afford to totally ignore their wishes. So to gauge whether the idea of accountable vouchers might fly, I went over to the headquarters of the National Education Association for an interview with its president, Reg Weaver. It was a pretty depressing talk. Our hourlong chat was illustrative of the Democrats' stubborn and intellectually unpersuasive opposition to vouchers.

As we got started, Weaver reminded me that I was sitting in the (quite plush) corner office of "the president of the largest union in the country." The NEA has 2.7 million members. I asked him what he thought about an accountable voucher proposal, which from a union's perspective mixes the worst of both worlds—vouchers and tests. His tone instantly got testy. "I don't think anything about it," he said. "And the reason I don't think anything about it is because once I begin to give credence to the idea, then people will begin to think that it is something that is reasonable."

Moving on, Weaver's primary objection to vouchers is the common argument that they drain money from the public schools. I asked him how they drain money when vouchers only take money (and in the case of Washington, $3,000 less than the District's $10,852 per-student spending) that would have been used to educate a student that school no longer has to educate. Weaver quickly responded, "Did the heat bill go down? Did the light bill go down?" Asked for examples of associated costs beyond electricity, his response was, "I don't know," 30-second pause, "I don't know. I hadn't thought about that."

On the prompting of his helpful press aide, Weaver added that schools that lose students to vouchers might not be able to afford state- of-the-art technology or foreign-language teachers. Of course, I thought, a lack of access to PowerPoint and Latin classes is not what's driving parents like Tracy Tucker—who compared D.C. public schools to prison—into the voucher camp. But I kept that thought to myself.

One point in the interview, however, gave me some hope. Weaver was objecting that President Bush's voucher proposal would only help a limited number of students. On the facts, he may be right. Yet it's perverse to argue that because vouchers can't help every disadvantaged student, they shouldn't be used to help some. Mayor Williams likens that argument to saying that doctors shouldn't bother treating sick patients and instead tell them to hang on while he researches a cure. In any event, I decided to call Weaver's bluff. I asked if he'd support some kind of voucher if every student in D.C. had access to one. "If they would give [all] 67,000 students a voucher, yeah," he said.

It's a start, anyway.

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ington, D.C., charter schools have not, on average, performed as well as their public school counterparts on standardized tests. One, Associates for the Renewal in Education Charter School, is being shut down for its flagging test scores and 60 percent attendance rate. Another, New School for Enterprise and Development, was recently featured in a *Washington Post* story in which a teacher was listening to rap music from a boombox while supposedly teaching a history class. The *Post* also noted that, by new federal standards, one-third of charter schools would be considered failing, compared to one-fifth of D.C. public schools.

The big difference, however, between charter schools and private schools is that the former are established with self-correcting mechanisms of accountability. If a charter school fails to achieve its promise of better results, its school district has the power—increasingly acted upon—to shut it down. Washington, D.C., has shut down a total of seven charter schools to date. And districts and parents can know which charter schools are failing because, under Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, children who go to charter schools have to pass the same performance tests as kids in regular public schools.

The way to insure that vouchers really work, then, is to make them agents of accountability for private schools that accept them. And the way to do that is to marry the voucher concept with the testing regime mandated by Bush's No Child Left Behind Act. Allow children in either low-income or failing schools to go to a private school of their choosing, but only so long as that school participates in the same testing requirements mandated for public schools.

What would be the substantive effect of such a program? Broadly speaking, accountability would be the acid test for voucher proponents, forcing private schools to prove they're providing the high quality education they claim to offer. Requiring the same tests for both public and private schools would give parents the comparable scores they would need to make informed choices about which schools are better for their kids—a *Consumer Reports* of sorts for K-through-12 education. It would also enhance the competition between public and private schools, pressuring both to improve if they want to attract or retain students. (To make the competition fair, private schools should also be required—as charter schools are—to accept all students who apply, rather than cherry-picking the preferable ones. Private schools that accept vouchers should also be barred from discriminating against the hiring teachers and staff for reasons of race, gender, or religion). Finally, comparable testing data would allow government, if it so chooses (and it should), to cut off the flow of vouchers to those low-performing private schools that consistently fail to improve—just as the No Child Left Behind Act requires the shutting-down of consistently low-performing public schools.

Vouch for It

Besides being good policy, accountable vouchers are also good politics for Democrats. Championing the idea would not only put Democrats back on the side of low-income parents desperate for better schools for their kids. It would also shatter Bush's political base. Conservatives would chafe at the notion of imposing federal regulations on a hitherto unfettered part of the private sector. Indeed, the money behind the voucher movement—including the referenda that failed in California and Michigan in 2000—comes from voucher purists who don't want to see any restrictions placed on voucher money. "The reason private schools do better than public schools is that they have the flexibility of designing their own curriculum and using their own methods, which may be different than what the state test is after," says David Salisbury, director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the CATO Institute. "Imposing the state test on private schools basically works to make them more like public schools. Consumers are the best way to hold private schools accountable, not political bodies." Principled voucher supporters on the right, however, would find it difficult to object to the idea that private schools should be held accountable to the same performance tests Bush has imposed on public schools: "Voucher supporters are going to have to recognize that if they are going to have broad appeal and they're going to take public money, they are going to have to accept very basic obligations," notes Terry Moe, the voucher scholar.

Many ideologically driven conservatives have long been drawn to vouchers chiefly as a back-door way of shrinking the size and reach of government. Yet that is another reason why liberals should love the idea of accountable vouchers, for such vouchers would have the opposite effect. They would bring private schools into the public orbit, marshalling their resources toward the public good. Private schools that accept accountable vouchers would not only have to test their students like public schools do. They would also almost certainly find themselves choosing a similar curriculum to public schools because the tests are scored based on student knowledge of that curriculum. In these and other ways, private schools that accept vouchers will, over time, come to resemble successful charter schools— free of the more onerous bureaucratic rules (procurement procedures, seniority hiring mandates) that weigh down traditional public schools, but still reflective of and responsive to public demands.

Of course, the strongest argument for accountable vouchers is they might open up better educational opportunities for at least some of the millions of disadvantaged children currently stuck in dysfunctional public schools. But for Democrats, the political argument is also compelling. If Democrats merely gainsay the voucher proposal President Bush will almost surely promote in 2004, they will appear (rightly) as educational obstructionists, and lose support among swing voters and low-income urban parents. But if they get behind the accountable vouchers idea, Democrats would not only enhance their appeal to these key constituencies. They would also be calling the president's bluff. How can you demand high educational standards for public schools, they could say, but not for private schools that accept public money? Bush would be in a bind: overrule his own base, or lose the high ground on educational accountability. It's a choice any liberal should enjoy watching him make. ◆

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The Post-Modern President

Deception, denial, and relativism: what the Bush administration learned from the French.

By Joshua Micah Marshall

Every president deceives. But each has his own style of deceit. Ronald Reagan was a master of baseless stories—trees cause more pollution than cars—that captured his vision of how the world *should* be. George H.W. Bush, generally conceded to be a decent fellow, tended to lie only in two circumstances: When running for president, or to save his own skin, as in Iran Contra. Bill Clinton famously lied about embarrassing details of his private life, and his smooth, slippery rhetorical style made some people suspect he was lying even when he was telling the truth.

George W. Bush has a forthright speaking style which convinces many people that he's telling the truth even when he's lying. But in under three years, Bush has told at least as many impressive untruths as each of his three predecessors. (See The Mendacity Index ®, p.27) His style of deception is also unique. When Reagan said he didn't trade arms for hostages, or Clinton insisted he didn't have sex with "that woman," the falsity of the claims was readily provable—by an Oliver North memo or a stained blue dress. Bush and his administration, however, specialize in a particular form of deception: the confidently expressed, but currently undisprovable assertion. In his State of the Union address last January, the president claimed that Saddam Hussein had ties to al Qaeda and a robust nuclear weapons program, and that therefore we needed to invade Iraq. Even at the time, many military and intelligence experts said that the president's assertions probably weren't true and were based on at best fragmentary evidence. But there was no way to know for sure unless we did what Bush wanted. When the president said on numerous occasions that his tax cuts—which were essentially long-term rate reductions for the wealthy—would spur growth without causing structural deficits, most experts, again, cried foul, pointing out that both past experience and accepted economic theory said otherwise. But in point of fact, nobody could say for sure that maybe *this* time the cuts might not work.

This summer, when it became clear that Iraq had no active nuclear weapons program—indeed showed no apparent evidence of any weapons of mass destruction at all—that the economy was still losing jobs, and that the administration's own budget office predicted deficits as far as it dared project, Bush's reputation for honesty took a turn for the worse. By the middle of July, only 47 percent of adults surveyed by *Time*/CNN said they felt they could trust the president, down from 56 percent in March. The president's response to all this was to make yet more confidently expressed, undisprovable assertions. He simply insisted that his tax cuts would create jobs—and who knows? Perhaps someday they will—and that American forces would eventually turn up evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But by then, the press was beginning to pick up on deceptions in other policy areas—the redaction of evidence of global warming in EPA reports, the administration's refusal to provide Congress with any estimates whatsoever about the costs of the occupation of Iraq. The White House seemed guilty of what might be called persistent, chronic up-is-downism, the tendency to ridicule the possibility that a given policy might actually have its predictable adverse consequences, to deny those consequences once they have already occurred, or—failing that—to insist against all evidence that those consequences were part of the plan all along. By late July, even a

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paragon of establishment conservatism like *Barron's* columnist Alan Abelson was lamenting the president's "regrettable aversion to the truth and reality when the truth and reality aren't lovely or convenient."

The president and his aides don't speak untruths because they are necessarily people of bad character. They do so because their politics and policies demand it. As astute observers such as *National Journal's* Jonathan Rauch have recently noted, George W. Bush campaigned as a moderate, but has governed with the most radical agenda of any president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Indeed, the aim of most of Bush's policies has been to overturn what FDR created three generations ago. On the domestic front, that has meant major tax cuts forcing sharp reductions in resources for future government activism, combined with privatization of as many government functions as possible. Abroad, Bush has pursued an expansive and militarized unilateralism aimed at cutting the United States free from entangling alliances and international treaty obligations so as to maximize freedom of maneuver for American power in a Hobbesian world.

Yet this is not an agenda that the bulk of the American electorate ever endorsed. Indeed, poll after poll suggest that Bush's policy agenda is not particularly popular. What the public wants is its problems solved: terrorists thwarted, jobs created, prescription drugs made affordable, the environment protected. Almost all of Bush's deceptions have been deployed when he has tried to pass off his preexisting agenda items as solutions to particular problems with which, for the most part, they have no real connection.

That's when the unverifiable assertion comes in handy. Many of the administration's policy arguments have amounted to predictions—tax cuts will promote job growth, Saddam is close to having nukes, Iraq can be occupied with a minimum of U.S. manpower—that most experts believed to be wrong, but which couldn't be definitely disproven until events played out in the future. In the midst of getting those policies passed, the administration's main obstacle has been the experts themselves—the economists who didn't trust the budget projections, the generals who didn't buy the troop estimates, intelligence analysts who questioned the existence of an active nuclear weapons program in Iraq. That has created a strong incentive to delegitimize the experts—a task that comes particularly easy to the revisionists who drive Bush administration policy. They tend to see experts as guardians of the status quo, who seek to block any and all change, no matter how necessary, and whose views are influenced and corrupted by the agendas and mindsets of their agencies. Like orthodox Marxists who pick apart mainstream economics and anthropology as the creations of "bourgeois ideology" or Frenchified academic post-modernists who "deconstruct" knowledge in a similar fashion, revisionist ideologues seek to expose "the facts" as nothing more than the spin of experts blinded by their own unacknowledged biases. The Bush administration's *bêtes noire* aren't patriarchy, racism, and homophobia, but establishmentarianism, big-government liberalism, and what they see as pervasive foreign policy namby-pambyism. For them, ignoring the experts and their "facts" is not only necessary to advance their agenda, but a virtuous effort in the service of a higher cause.

Tinker Beltway

To understand the Bush administration's need and propensity for deception, one must go back to the ideological warfare of the 1990s, which pitted Bill Clinton's New Democratic agenda against Newt Gingrich's Contract for America Republicanism. Clinton's politics were an updated version of early 20th century Progressivism, with its suspicion of ideology and heavy reliance on technocratic expertise. He argued that while government agencies or our relations with the international community might need reform, they were basically sound, and their proper use was to solve discrete problems. Crime on the rise? Put more cops on the street. Federal budget deficits out of control? Trim federal spending and nudge up taxes on the wealthy. Many in Washington debated whether Clinton's policies would work; some still argue that they didn't. But few ever questioned that their intent was to solve these specific problems.

Newt Gingrich and the House Republicans who came to power in 1995 held a very different, neo-Reaganite view. Deriding the whole notion of a federal response for every crisis, they argued that society's problems could be solved only through a radical reordering, both of government in Washington and of America's relationship with the world. This required tax cuts to drain money out of the Beltway; radically scaling back regulation on business; pulling America out of many international agreements; and cutting funding to the United Nations. The Gingrichites were not pragmatists but visionaries and revolutionaries. They wanted to overthrow the existing structure of American governance, not tinker with it.

The contest between these two worldviews played out during the middle 1990s, and eventually the public rendered its verdict at the ballot box. In 1996, Clinton decisively won reelection and Gingrich's GOP lost seats in the House. Then in 1998, at the height of impeachment, the House GOP lost even more seats—marking the first time since 1934 that the party in the White House won seats during a midterm election—and Clinton's job approval rating soared as high as it ever would during his eight years in office.

Voters had chosen problem-solving moderation over radical revisionism—and perceptive GOP leaders knew it. Following the 1998 electoral setback, they quieted their talk of revolution and mulled over how to soften their image. More and more of them gravitated towards the son of former president George H.W. Bush, the kinder, gentler Republican. Texas governor George W. Bush had a reputation as a pragmatist who made common cause with Democratic leaders in the Texas legislature. He launched his campaign for president not as an ideologue, but as a "compassionate conservative," who spoke the language of progressive problem-solving on issues such as education, and was perfectly willing to use the powers of the federal government to get results. Even when Bush proposed a massive tax cut during the Republican primaries, most commentators dismissed it as a campaign ploy to fend off his more conservative GOP rival, Steve Forbes.

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After ascending to the presidency without winning the popular vote, Bush was widely expected to compromise on the size of the tax cut.

It soon became clear, however, that Bush would govern very differently from how he ran. Instead of abandoning the tax cut, for instance, he became more determined to pass it, for rather than being a mere ploy, cutting taxes was a fundamental goal of his agenda. Politically, it was a policy on which each part of the once-fractious conservative base could agree. It also rewarded the party's biggest donors. But most importantly, tax cuts would help shift the very premises of American governance. Republicans had come to view progressive federal taxation as the linchpin of Democrat strength. As Rep. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), an up-and-coming conservative, told *The New Yorker's* Nicholas Lemann during the 2001 tax debate, "[t]oday fewer and fewer people pay taxes, and more and more are dependent on government, so the politician who promises the most from government is likely to win. Every day, the Republican Party is losing constituents, because every day more people can vote themselves more benefits without paying for it." By this theory, the more the tax burden shifted from upper-middle-class and wealthy voters to those of the middle class, the more average voters would feel the sting of each new government program, and the less likely they would be to support the Democrats who call for such programs. To put it another way, it was a policy designed to turn more voters into Republicans, particularly the middle class. Without massive upper-bracket tax cuts, DeMint worried, "The Reagan message"—smaller government—"won't work anymore."

But telling the majority of voters that your tax policies are designed to shift more of the burden of paying for government onto them is not a very effective way of eliciting their support. So, instead, Bush pitched his tax cuts as the solution to whatever problems were most in the news at the time. During the election, he argued that tax cuts were a way to refund to voters part of a budget surplus that people like Alan Greenspan worried was growing too big. By early 2001, it became clear that those surpluses were never going to materialize. So the administration cooked up an entirely new rationale: The tax cut was needed as fiscal stimulus to pull the economy out of an impending recession. In other words, the tax cut that was tailor-made for a booming economy made equally good sense in a tanking one. When the economy eventually began to grow again but only at feeble levels, the administration insisted that things would have been worse without the tax cuts (another assertion impossible to prove or disprove). And when, because of that anemic growth, coupled with gains in productivity, the unemployment rate continued to rise, the administration had yet another excuse: A new round of tax cuts, they said, would generate jobs.

The same technique—invoking the problem of the moment to sell a predetermined policy agenda—came to characterize just about everything the administration would do. Take energy policy. Oilmen like the president and vice-president have wanted to drill in places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for years because of their generalized belief that U.S. energy supplies should be exploited as fully and rapidly as possible. But for a public increasingly enamored of the idea of protecting pristine wilderness areas, this rationale was insufficient to get the derricks pumping. Then, while the Bush administration was formulating their energy policy during the spring and summer of 2001, California had an "energy crisis." Suddenly, there was a big problem, and the administration had what it said was the perfect solution: drilling in ANWR and giving free reign to energy producers. But California's shortage had nothing to do with marginal supplies of oil, and we now know it had everything to do with companies like Enron gaming an ill-conceived energy privatization regime in that state. When that became apparent, the administration didn't skip a beat. 9/11 came soon after, and instead of heading off an energy crisis, the administration pitched drilling in ANWR as a way to safeguard national security by weaning ourselves off from foreign oil supplies.

Many pundits have mocked these constantly-shifting rationales as though the administration is somehow confused. But they only seem confused if you assume that the problem needing to be solved actually called forth the policy solution aimed at solving it. Once you realize that the desire for the policy is the parent of the rationale, and not the other way around, everything falls into place.

Trickle Down Deception

Iraq was the most telling example. Many neoconservatives from the first Bush administration had long regretted the decision to leave Saddam Hussein in power in 1991. During their years out of power, as these neocons hashed out a doctrine of post-Cold War American military primacy, Saddam's removal moved higher and higher up their list of priorities. He was, after all, the prime obstacle to U.S. dominance of the Middle East. And holding him in check was generating serious diplomatic and military damage in the region.

Those plans to remove Saddam shot to the top of the White House's agenda within hours of the 9/11 attacks. The neocons believed that the threat of catastrophic terror required not just taking down al Qaeda but solving the root problem of Islamic terrorism by remaking the entire Middle East. And ousting Saddam was at the center of the plan. Outrage over the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia—put there to contain Saddam—had helped Osama bin Laden recruit his jihadists. And installing a U.S.-backed regime in Baghdad could, the neocons believed, help trigger a domino effect against the old order which would spread secular, democratic regimes throughout the region.

But that was just a theory. In practice, Saddam and al Qaeda were largely unconnected. In fact, the two goals were often at odds with each other. When the Pentagon needed its top special forces to lead the search for Saddam Hussein, Michael Duffy and Massimo Calabresi of *Time* reported, it simply reassigned the soldiers who had been on the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. Again, a newly apparent problem—the al Qaeda terrorist threat—was being used to advance an existing and largely unrelated policy goal.

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The effort to make the Iraq-al Qaeda connection stick gave rise to the administration's grandest deception: the charge that Saddam was rapidly reconstituting his nuclear weapons program and might slip a nuclear bomb—or the chemical and biological weapons he was thought to have already—to bin Laden's terrorists. "We know he's got ties with al Qaeda," Bush said at an election rally in November 2002. "A nightmare scenario, of course, is that he becomes the arsenal of a terrorist network, where he could attack America and he'd leave no fingerprints behind." To make that scenario seem plausible, the administration had to muscle all manner of analysts at the CIA, the State Department, and elsewhere. These analysts knew the Middle East best and doubted the existence of any Saddam-al Qaeda link. Nor did they believe that Saddam's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons justified the crisis atmosphere the White House whipped up in the leadup to war.

The clash spilled into public view this summer, after American forces failed to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq at all. The media began to press White House officials on how false nuclear weapons claims had made their way into Bush's State of the Union address and other speeches. Administration officials have given shifting accounts, and tried to frame the story as a matter of procedural breakdown. But one former official of Bush's White House has suggested a more compelling psychological explanation. Writing in *National Review Online* this past July, former Bush speechwriter David Frum argued that "[t]he CIA's warnings on Iraq matters had lost some of their credibility in the 1990s. The agency was regarded by many in the Bush administration as reflexively and implacably hostile to any activist policy in Iraq. Those skeptics had come to believe that the agency was slanting its information on Iraq in order to maneuver the administration into supporting the agency's own soft-line policies."

We have since learned that it wasn't just mid-level aides who knew about and discounted the CIA's warnings, though we still don't know exactly how far up this dismissive attitude went. But Frum's point rings very true for those who followed the infighting between Bush appointees and the Agency over the last two years. Within the White House, the opinions of whole groups of agency experts were routinely dismissed as not credible, and unhelpful facts were dismissed as the obstructionist maneuverings of bureaucrats seeking to undermine needed change.

Indeed, this same tendency to dismiss expertise shaped the whole war effort. Just before the United States invaded Iraq, Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki—who had focused his tenure on peacekeeping and nation building—said that hundreds of thousands of soldiers would be needed to pacify and control Iraq. Days later, Paul Wolfowitz told another committee that Shinseki didn't know what he was talking about; the occupation, Wolfowitz said, would require far fewer troops. At the time, many took Wolfowitz's evident self-assurance as a sign that he knew something the general didn't. Now, it's clear that it was the other way around, and Wolfowitz was engaging in a typical undisprovable assertion.

Senior officials like Wolfowitz set an example that trickled down the bureaucratic ladder. One Pentagon civil servant specializing in Middle East policy described to me how, a few months after 9/11, he was chastised by a superior, a political appointee, for delivering a negative assessment of a proposed policy in a briefing memo to the secretary of defense. The civil servant changed his assessment as instructed but still included a list of potential pros and cons. But that wasn't good enough either. The senior official told him, "'It's still not acceptable. Take out all the discussion of the cons and basically write there's no reason why we shouldn't [do this].' I just thought this was intellectually dishonest."

Hide the Baloney

That cavalier dismissal of expert analysis isn't limited to the national security arena. In the summer of 2001, the Bush administration was looking for a decision the president could make on the use of embryonic stem cells for medical research. His Christian conservative base wanted an outright prohibition. But such a ban would have alienated swing voters eager for the therapies that could come from that research, such as cures for Parkinson's disease. As Nicholas Thompson explained in these pages ("Science Friction," July/August 2003), Bush's advisors came up with a scheme they thought would pass muster with both the core and the swing voters: the president would limit research to only those stem-cell lines which existed already. But before the decision was announced, federal scientists warned the administration that there simply weren't enough reliable existing lines to be useful to researchers. The White House ignored the warnings, which have subsequently proved all too accurate, and went ahead with the decision, thereby setting back crucial medical research for years.

Look at just about any policy or department of government, and you're likely to see the same pattern. In July, *Slate's* Russ Baker reported that the Bush administration "muzzles routine economic information that's unfavorable." Last year, the administration simply stopped issuing a report that tracks factory closings throughout the country, the better to hide evidence of mass layoffs. The report was reinstated only after *The Washington Post* happened to notice the cancellation, disclosed only in a footnote to the Department of Labor's final report for 2002, issued on Christmas Eve.

The sidelining of in-house expertise is nowhere more apparent than on the environmental front. This Bush administration came into office just as the consensus was solidifying among scientists that human activity contributes to climate change. That consensus, however, ran counter to key administration goals, such as loosening regulations on coal-burning power plants and scuttling international agreements aimed at limiting fossil-fuel emissions. Rather than change its agenda, the administration chose to discredit the experts. As GOP pollster Frank Luntz wrote in a memo just before the 2002 election: "The scientific debate [on global warming] is closing against us but is not yet closed. There is still an opportunity to challenge the science." The idea that global warming was a reality that actually had to be grappled

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with simply didn't occur to Luntz. Indeed, when questioned about whether administration policies might contribute to global warming, White House spokesmen direct reporters to the small, and rapidly diminishing, group of scientists who still doubt that humans contribute to the problem. In June, when the EPA released an Environmental Progress report, the administration edited out passages that described scientific concerns about global warming.

In any White House, there is usually a tension between the political agenda and disinterested experts who might question it. But what's remarkable about this White House is how little tension there seems to be. Expert analysis that isn't politically helpful simply gets ignored.

The Boys in Striped Pants

Educated, liberal-leaning professionals are apt to see this conflict as an open-and-shut case: Expertise should always trump ideology. This has been the case for over a century, ever since Progressive Era reformers took on corrupt city machines and elevated technocratic expertise above politics. Those early Progressives restructured government by turning functions hitherto run by elected officials over to appointed, credentialed experts. And many of the ways they refashioned government now seem beyond question. Few would challenge, for instance, our practice of assigning decisions at the FDA or CDC to panels of qualified scientists rather than political appointees. On the other hand, anyone who's worked as a political appointee at the higher levels of government and tried to get anything new done has been frustrated by the myriad ways in which bureaucrats manipulate numbers and information in ways intended to thwart the new agenda and maintain the status quo. There is a long tradition in American politics of finessing policy initiatives past stubborn bureaucrats. Franklin Roosevelt, for instance, routinely used amateur diplomats and personal intermediaries to sidestep the professionals at Foggy Bottom—the "boys in striped pants," he called them—for fear that they would slow-roll, walk back or generally meddle in his chosen course in international affairs. As the historian Warren Kimball aptly notes, Roosevelt shared the conviction that foreign service officers believed that they had a "priestly monopoly against intervention by members of Congress, journalists, professors, voters and other lesser breeds."

All of this is to say that the Bush administration's unwillingness to be pushed around by the bureaucratic experts or to have their ideas hemmed in by establishment opinion isn't by itself a bad thing. Nor is this administration the first to ignore or suppress unhelpful data or analyses from experts that runs contrary to its agenda—foolish as such conduct usually proves. But in this administration the mindset of deception runs deeper. If you're a revisionist—someone pushing for radically changing the status quo—you're apt to see "the experts" not just as people who may be standing in your way, but as people whose minds have been corrupted by a wrongheaded ideology and whose arguments can therefore be ignored. To many in the Bush administration, "the experts" look like so many liberals wedded to a philosophy of big government, the welfare state, over-regulation and a pussyfooting role for the nation abroad. The Pentagon civil servant quoted above told me that the standard response to warnings from the Joint Staff about potential difficulties was simply to say: "That's just the Joint Staff being obstructionist." Even if the experts are right in the particulars—the size of the deficit, the number of troops needed in Iraq—their real goal is to get in the way of necessary changes.

Après nous, le déluge

In that simple, totalizing assumption we find the kernel of almost every problem the administration has faced over recent months—and a foretaste of the troubles the nation may confront in coming years. By disregarding the advice of experts, by shunting aside the cadres of career professionals with on-the-ground experience in these various countries, the administration's hawks cut themselves off from the practical know-how which would have given them some chance of implementing their plans successfully. In a real sense, they cut themselves off from reality. When they went into Iraq they were essentially flying blind, having disengaged from almost everyone who had real-world experience in how effective occupation, reconstruction, and nation-building was done. And much the same can be said of the administration's take on economic policy, environmental policy, and in almost every sort of policy question involving science. Muzzling the experts helped the White House muscle its revisionist plans through. But in numerous cases, it prevented them from implementing even their own plans effectively.

Everyone is compromised by bias, agendas, and ideology. But at the heart of the revisionist mindset is the belief that there is really nothing more than that. Ideology isn't just the prism through which we see the world, or a pervasive tilt in the way a person understands a given set of facts. Ideology is really all there is. For an administration that has been awfully hard on the French, that mindset is . . . well, rather French. They are like deconstructionists and post-modernists who say that *everything* is political or that *everything* is ideology. That mindset makes it easy to ignore the facts or brush them aside because "the facts" aren't really facts, at least not as most of us understand them. If they come from people who don't agree with you, they're just the other side's argument dressed up in a mantle of facticity. And if that's all the facts are, it's really not so difficult to go out and find a new set of them. The fruitful and dynamic tension between political goals and disinterested expert analysis becomes impossible.

Doctrinaire as they may be in the realm of policy, the president's advisors are the most hard-boiled sort of pragmatists when it comes to gaining and holding on to political power. And there's no way they planned to head into their reelection campaign with a half-trillion-dollar deficit looming over their heads and an unpredictable, bleeding guerrilla war in Iraq on their hands. At the level of tactics and execution, the administration's war on expertise has already yielded some very disappointing, indeed dangerous results. And if that gets you worried, just remember that the same folks are in charge of the grand strategy, too. ◆

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The Mendacity Index®

This summer, after it became clear that President George W. Bush had made false statements about Iraq's nuclear weapons capacity and links to al Qaeda in his January State of the Union address, some commentators accused him of being the most dishonest president in recent American history. There has been, however, no scientifically serious attempt to test such accusations—until now.

To come up with our Mendacity Index®, we asked a nominating committee* of noted journalists and pundits to pick the most serious fibs, deceptions, and untruths spoken by each of the four most recent presidents. We selected the top six for each commander-in-chief, then presented the list to a panel of judges** with longtime experience in Washington. Panel members were instructed to rate each deception on a scale of 1 (least serious) to 5 (most serious). Then we averaged the scores for each deception and for each president. The results can be seen on the following pages. We believe their validity rests somewhere between the Periodic Table and the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings.

Don't trust our experts? Then we invite you to take the survey yourself. Visit www.washingtonmonthly.com or www.beliefnet.com to rate the presidents. We'll be keeping a running tab of the results. May the best man win!

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* **Nominating Committee**: Tony Blankley, Sidney Blumenthal, James Carville, John Fund, Joe Conason, Jonah Goldberg, Hendrick Hertzberg, Haynes Johnson, Hamilton Jordan, Michael Kinsley, Victor Navasky, Bruce Reed, Wlady Pleszczynski, and David Tell

** **Panel of Judges**: Jodie Allen, Russell Baker, Margaret Carlson, Thomas Mann, Norm Ornstein, Richard Reeves, Larry Sabato, and Juan Williams

Art by Taylor Jones/LA Times

Ronald Reagan

3.3 Overall Mendacity Rating

Killer Trees. After opining in August 1980 that "trees cause more pollution than automobiles do," Reagan arrived at a campaign rally to find a tree decorated with this sign: "Chop me down before I kill again." ***Score=1.8***

Balance the Budget And Increase Defense Spending? The Reagan administration introduced the 1981 Economic Recovery Act by claiming that it would cut taxes by 30 percent, increase defense spending by three-quarters of a trillion dollars, and achieve a balanced budget within three years. Budget director David Stockman admitted in November of 1981 that, "None of us really understands what's going on with all these numbers" and that supply-side economics "was always a Trojan horse to bring down the top rate." ***Score=4.5***

Guns of Brixton. "In England, if a criminal carried a gun, even though he didn't use it, he was tried for first-degree murder and hung if he was found guilty," Ronald Reagan claimed in April 1982. When informed that the story was "just not true," White House spokesman Larry Speakes said, "Well, it's a good story, though. It made the point, didn't it?" Reagan repeated the story again on March 21, 1986 during an interview with *The New York Times.* ***Score=2.4***

The Liberator. In November 1983, Reagan told visiting Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir that he had served as a photographer in a U.S. Army unit assigned to film Nazi death camps. He repeated the story to Simon Wiesenthal the following February. Reagan never visited or filmed a concentration camp; he spent World War II in Hollywood, making training films with the First Motion Picture Unit of the Army Air Corps. ***Score=2.9***

Arms for Hostages. "We did not—repeat, did not—trade weapons or anything else for hostages, nor will we," Reagan proclaimed in November 1986. Four months later, on March 4, 1987, Reagan admitted in a televised national address: "A few months ago, I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not." ***Score=4.6***

Cadillac Queens. Over a period of about five years, Reagan told the story of the "Chicago welfare queen" who had 80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards, and collected benefits for "four nonexisting deceased husbands," bilking the government out of "over $150,000." The real welfare recipient to whom Reagan referred was actually convicted for using two different aliases to collect $8,000. Reagan continued to use his version of the story even after the press pointed out the actual facts of the case to him. ***Score=3.9***

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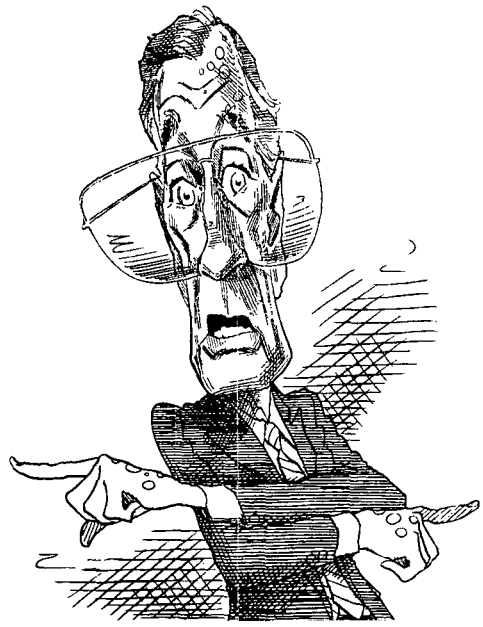

George H.W. Bush

3.2 Overall Mendacity Rating

Read My Lips. In his speech to the Republican Convention on Aug. 18, 1988, Bush predicted that, if he was elected, "the Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push, and I'll say no, and they'll push again, and I'll say to them, 'Read my lips: no new taxes.'" In his budget for 1991, Bush raised the top income-tax rate and boosted levies on gasoline, tobacco, and booze. ***Score=2.8***

Drugs in Lafayette Park. Addressing the country about the war on drugs on September 5, 1989, Bush held a plastic bag of crack cocaine before the television camera and said it had been "seized a few days ago in a park across the street from the White House." In order to obtain the prop, however, undercover DEA agents had lured a teenage drug dealer from southeast D.C. to Lafayette Park. The dealer's initial response to the request was, "Where the [expletive] is the White House?" ***Score=2.8***

SCUD Studs? On March 14, 1990, President George H.W. Bush bragged that Patriot missiles placed in Israel and Saudi Arabia had successfully intercepted "41 of 42" Iraqi SCUD missiles. "Thank God for the Patriot missile," Bush said. But an Israeli Defense Ministry study found that only 1 of 17 Patriot missiles fired in Israeli had actually hit a SCUD. Studies by an MIT physicist suggested that the hit rate from Patriot missile launchers in Saudi Arabia was not substantially better. ***Score=3.3***

The Best Man For The Job? Upon nominating Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court of the United States, Bush told reporters, "The fact that he is black and a minority has nothing to do with this sense that he is the best qualified at this time. I kept my word to the American people and to the Senate by picking the best man for the job on the merits." Thomas had served only one year as a judge and was given the middling endorsement of "qualified" by a divided American Bar Association panel. ***Score=3.4***

Iran Contra. In 1986, when asked whether he had participated in White House discussions about the Iran-Contra arms program as vice president, Bush claimed to have been "out of the loop." He specifically denied attending a January 1986 meeting at which Secretary of State George Schultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger opposed the arms-for-hostages deal. But White House logs, made public by independent counsel Kenneth Walsh in 1992, revealed that Bush had attended that meeting, and several others. In response, Bush claimed not to have heard Schultz and Weinberger's objections, through Weinberger's journal entry for the meeting noted of the deal "VP favored." ***Score=4.0***

Bill Clinton, Taxaholic. During the 1992 campaign, Bush repeatedly claimed that Bill Clinton had "raised taxes 128 times" as governor of Arkansas. *The Wall Street Journal* and the Congressional Research Service found that, to reach 128 taxes, Bush had counted as "raising taxes" such acts as lengthening the state's dog-racing season and simply counted many taxes twice. As governor, they concluded, Clinton had cut taxes about as many times as he'd raised them. ***Score=3.1***

Bill Clinton

3.1 Overall Mendacity Rating

Draft-Dodging. In a 1991 intervi with *The Washington Post*, Clinton s: "The rule was there was no gradu deferment, but you got to finish term you were in ... I wound up j going through the lottery, and it was j a pure fluke that I was never called." I as both the Associated Press and *Wall Street Journal* reported in 19 Clinton received an induction no before promising to join an ROTC p gram in 1969 and later wrote to a rese colonel expressing thanks for "savi him from the draft by letting him t the deferment even though he neve fact joined the ROTC. ***Score=***

Sending Troops to Bosnia. In 19 after deciding to deploy U.S. troop Bosnia—in violation of a 1993 ple not to deploy troops without a clear strategy—Clinton pledged that t would not be sent "unless I absolutely sure that the goals we se are clear, realistic, and achievable about a year." U.S. troops are stil Bosnia today. ***Score=***

Remembering The Iowa Caucuse: the start of the 1996 election sea: Clinton commented, "Since I was a tle boy, I've heard about the Iowa c cuses." There were no Iowa cauc when Clinton was a boy. They bega 1972, while Clinton was a graduate dent at Oxford University. ***Score=***

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Black Church Burnings. During a weekly Oval Office radio address on June 8th, 1996, Clinton told his audience that "I have vivid and painful memories of black churches being burned in my own state when I was a child." The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reported the following day that there was no evidence available of a black church ever being burned down in Arkansas. ***Score=2.8***

That Woman. During a press conference on Jan. 26, 1998, Clinton declared, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky." But Clinton had, indeed, received oral sex from Monica Lewinsky, a White House intern at the time. ***Score=4.1***

Rwandan Inaction. In March of 1998, Clinton traveled to Rwanda to apologize for U.S. inaction during the 1994 genocide saying that he and others "did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror." But international press coverage, American intelligence, and reports from human rights organizations all indicated early on that hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Tutsis were the victims of systematic, state-sponsored killing. Just 11 days after the start of the killings, Secretary of State Warren Christopher had ordered U.N. ambassador Madeleine Albright to call for an immediate withdrawal of all U.N. troops from Rwanda. ***Score=4.1***

George W. Bush

3.6 Overall Mendacity Rating

The Trifecta. On many occasions during 2001 and 2002, President Bush talked about a campaign promise made in Chicago that he would only deficit spend "if there is a national emergency, if there is a recession, or if there's a war," sometimes adding, after 9/11, "Never did I dream we'd have a trifecta." Reporters pressed the Bush's communications staff to prove that Bush had actually made such a statement during the 2000 campaign, but the White House couldn't turn up any proof. Bush continued to insist he'd made the promise. ***Score=2.9***

Cutting AmeriCorps. In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush made AmeriCorps the centerpiece of his new, post-9/11 service agenda, promising to expand the program's roster by 50 percent in order that Americans might serve "goals larger than self." But in 2003, he signed legislation that cut the program's operating budget by 30 percent. This year, AmeriCorps has half as many members as it did in 2001. ***Score=3.9***

Going to War. During a visit to West Virginia in January 2002, Bush joked that, "I've been to war. I've raised twins. If I had a choice, I'd rather go to war." During the Vietnam War, however, Bush served with the Air National Guard in Texas, and had specifically noted on his Air Force officers test that he did not wish to serve overseas. ***Score=3.1***

16 Words. In making the case for a U.S. invasion of Iraq, President Bush stated in early 2003 that "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." Yet the CIA had itself previously warned both top White House officials and British intelligence that the reports of an Iraqi attempt to buy uranium from African countries were almost certainly untrue, and no nuclear program nor weapons of mass destruction have yet been found in Iraq. ***Score=4.5***

"Average" Tax Cuts. Announcing his second big tax cut package in January 2003, Bush stated that "These tax reductions will bring real and immediate benefits to middle-income Americans. Ninety-two million Americans will keep an average of $1,083 more of their own money." But because the package was tilted heavily towards the very wealthy, the average tax cut for households in the middle quintile of the income spectrum was only $217, according to the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. ***Score=3.6***

What WMDs? In May 2003, President Bush stated "We found the weapons of mass destruction." U.S. forces have yet to find any evidence of chemical, nuclear, or biological weapons in Iraq. ***Score=3.8***

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Bush's War

Welcome back to the '80s. Thanks to Whit understaffed, cops are overwhelmed

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

I am riding through Richmond, Va., with Sergeant David Wallis of the city police, and it is raining at a nearly biblical level—silver-dollar sized fat splats of water slapping against every surface. It's one of those late afternoon summer thunderstorms that starts out looking like it's got to be over in half a minute, and somehow just lasts and lasts. The city's streets are deserted and, Sgt. Wallis says, it's a good bet anyone still outside is a threat to public safety. We find them, camped outside an impregnable-looking housing project called Whitcomb Court. A few teenagers are standing spaced sentry-like, every thousand feet or so, along the project's main road. They have umbrellas cocked over their shoulders, but are still getting drenched. They're street-level crack dealers, says Wallis, the advance guard for the municipal menace. Even in these conditions they stay outside, like hardy weeds, peering jumpily down the road, hoping for a sale. Wallis drives by slowly, but the scrawny, soaked dealers don't scamper away, they just shoot him pugnacious you-can't-touch-me smirks. This is usual, Wallis says: "They know we've got no backup, and so they're not even scared of us anymore."

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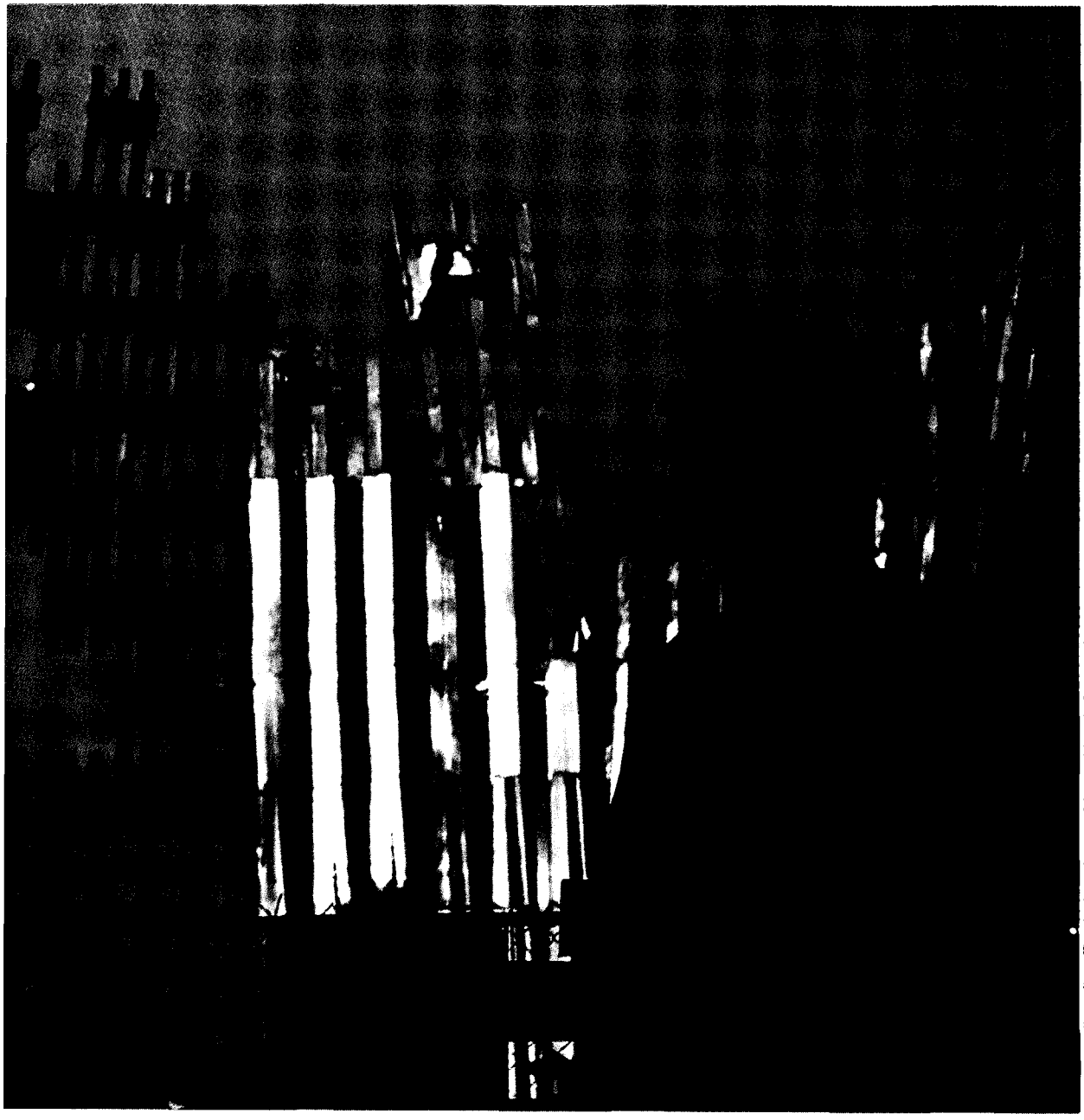
on Cops

House policy, police departments are murders are up, and killers are getting away.



A New York City police officer looks at the site of the World Trade Center/ Photo by KRT

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It wasn't always like this. Ten years ago, Wallis and a 25-officer narcotics squad cleaned out Whitcomb Court. They set up surveillance teams in the elementary school that abuts the project and staged regular raids, cops piling out of a suddenly arrived line of six, eight, 10 cars to snatch all the dealers and guns they could. Within three months, the dealer pyramid in Whitcomb Court had been broken, its principals in jail and the project quiet.

Afterwards when Wallis and his squad would ride through Whitcomb Court, the older residents would sometimes cheer.

Richmond's police were praised from all points on the political spectrum—from the Clinton administration to the NRA—for halving the city's murder rate in the 1990s. One hundred and sixty people were killed in Richmond in 1994, and 70 in 2001. Richmond's method was simple: a concentrated program of aggressive beat policing and strict enforcement of gun laws.

But now, Wallis and many of his colleagues report, they simply can't mount such focused campaigns. Richmond is in the throes of a manpower shortage that has stripped cops off street beats and forced the city to change its neighborhood policing strategies. "All we're able to do right now is respond to calls which come in," the department's chief, Andre Parker, told me. "We don't have enough men to do any proactive policing. It's very worrying."

Aggressive programs like the ones Richmond used to bring down crime require extra officers, so that while some cops are responding to ongoing crimes, others can stalk crooks. Now, Richmond deploys 90 fewer active officers (the department has 670 total) than it did when crime was plummeting. It's no coincidence, police officials here and criminologists nationwide argue, that the city's murder rate, after seven consecutive years of decline, jumped by 20 percent in 2002 and by another 15 percent in the first six months of 2003. With fewer detectives, fewer of Richmond's murders can be solved—only 22 percent of murders were solved last year, compared to 35 percent in 2000. Other crimes, particularly robbery, are also increasingly common—trends, say community leaders, that are endangering inner-city Richmond's fragile revitalization.

Richmond is a dramatic example of a trend that is beginning to appear around the country. After eight straight years of decline in the 1990s, the murder rate has begun to increase: by 2.5 percent in 2001, and then another 0.8 percent in 2002. Those two slight increases have meant hundreds more violent deaths each year.

Dips and surges in the crime rate, locally and nationally, depend on many complicated factors, from the health of the economy to the number of criminals in prison to the abundance of guns and drugs on the street. Criminologists have said that the present surge in many cities' crime rates is due in part to the recession and in part from a simple law of averages—crime can't go down forever. But more police on the street is one of the most effective ways to keep crime down—it's also the one factor that lies immediately within the control of government.

Tellingly, those cities, like Richmond, that suffer from the worst cop shortages are also experiencing the most dramatic spikes in crime. Police in Portland, Ore., which is 64 officers short of its full 1,000-officer staffing, have noticed a rise in crime across the board in the first four months of 2003. Chief Mark Kroeker says he thinks the "scariest" jump in violent crime is yet to come. Minneapolis, normally a 900-officer department, is some 200 cops short, and crime is up 46 percent since Sept. 11, 2001. Los Angeles is more than 1,000 cops short of full staffing. Crime there jumped by 7 percent in the last half of 2001 and by another 1 percent in 2002, a year in which the murder rate jumped by 11 percent.

How can cities be so foolish as to cut their police forces and spark an inevitable rise in crime? Part of the problem is the state and local fiscal crisis that has hit communities across the nation. But faced with the need to trim budgets, most cities have first cut health, education, and transportation spending, and tried to preserve their police forces. The real cause of the police shortage is not in City Hall but in the White House. The Bush administration's first budget eliminated all direct funding for street cops. The war in Iraq, fought largely without allies, has required the call-up of huge numbers of reserves, many of whom are cops. And instead of using the men in blue as eyes and ears on the domestic war on terrorism, the administration has, in effect, used them as glorified security guards. The federal government's repeated directives to local police to beef up patrols at potential terrorist targets have taken officers away from their regular duties. And because the feds have not paid for many of these extra patrols, homeland security has stretched local budgets even further.

On his Sept. 14, 2001, visit to Ground Zero, the president famously addressed a group of cops and firemen through a bullhorn, from the top of a pile of mangled steel. When someone in the crowd called out that he couldn't hear the president, Bush said, spontaneously: "I can hear you. The rest of the world can hear you." But now many cops feel they're not being heard. During an interview in late July, Richmond's Chief Parker told me he's been "dismayed at the current administration's attitude towards local law enforcement." The administration, he said, has not "seemed to grasp what we face."

The Thinning Blue Line

If the sudden disintegration of police forces and, in Rich-

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mond and so many other cities, the correlative return of crime have not yet caught the attention of most of the public, it may be at least in part because after eight straight years of declining crime in the 1990s, most of us have come to assume that the issue has been defanged. Much has been written about that dramatic drop. Criminologists, journalists, and criminal scientists ascribed crime's decline to the decade's sustained economic boom, the subduing of the crack epidemic, and a profound national shift in policing—a change often described as community policing. The new model, which emphasized a tangible police presence in the community, solving neighborhood problems, and talking with residents, became working doctrine in the nation's precinct houses.

On his Sept. 14, 2001, visit to Ground Zero, the president famously told a group of cops and firemen, "I can hear you." But now many cops feel they're not being heard.

In many ways, community policing was a return to the neighborhood-based model that developed after large, urban departments first began to be formed around the turn of the 20th century. For the next 30 years, policing was local: Officers walked beats on streets they frequently had grown up on. Complex criminal investigations were rare, so cops responded to calls about crime and community disorder—from vandalism to robbery to brawls. Urban police departments, which tended to be highly politicized and run by party bosses, were also frequently tools for dispensing social services and other forms of political patronage.

By the 1940s, this model was on the way out. As city bosses lost their firm control over police departments, cops moved towards a more professional, military model. They were more frequently armed, and more likely than not were riding in cruisers rather than walking the streets. Their focus became understanding the criminal mind and thwarting its ambitions. The archetype had shifted from the half-corrupt Irish beat cop, swiping a peddler's apple while driving loiterers off the sidewalk, to Joe Friday's just-the-facts-ma'am crime solver, who believed that the citizenry should be dealt with at an always-suspicious distance.

With the emptying out of the urban middle and working classes and a bulge in the populations of black and Hispanic young men—a tough set of demographic changes for the nation's police—crime began to balloon in the 1960s. An influx of Vietnam veterans into the policing ranks only strengthened the existent culture—hardened and Army-like. Jim Bueermann, who is now the chief of the Redlands, Calif., police department and is considered a pioneer of community policing, joined up with this generation, as did most of the officers now in what cops call "command positions." The dominant culture in the 1970s "was very purely law and order," Bueermann said. "There are bad guys out there who were disrupting the community, and our job was to catch them."

But as the Vietnam-veteran generation climbed through the ranks, in the 1970s and 1980s, the militaristic reputation of police officers preceded them into the neighborhoods, and more and more citizens began to view patrol officers as agents of fear, not trust. The 70s and 80s had seen corruption scandals, baton-wielding cop thugs standing at ready attention at protest marches, and finally, in Rodney King beating, and the riots the riots that followed. Cops in movies and on television, even when they were depicted heroically, were Dirty Harrys clearing out ghettos with guns, and playing fast and loose with the rules. "[The police were] isolated from the people," and "people were afraid of their police," Lee Brown, the former Houston and New York police commissioner credited with introducing community policing in both cities in the mid- and late 1980s, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

Police leaders, criminologists, and local politicians huddled in the late 80s to try to figure out what they could do against a frighteningly fast-rising national crime problem, which was driving even middle-class blacks to the suburbs and turning once-prosperous downtowns into dead zones. They seized upon the idea that the best place for policemen to be was not in their cruisers, hiding behind windshields and tough-guy sunglasses, but out talking to their people—the people they were assigned to protect—reminding them that the police didn't have to function as a garrison.

This new paradigm, community policing, depended in part on technological advances, which allowed departments to map emerging crime patterns and high-crime areas and shift officers accordingly. But a crucial component of this policy was what came to be known as the "broken windows" theory of crime, whose most prominent proponent was the neoconservative political scientist James Q. Wilson. In ghettos, Wilson argued, the persistent presence of quality-of-life problems like vandalism, abandoned cars, and graffiti had profound psychological effects: It showed residents that the police had lost control of the streets to drug dealers and criminals, shuttering economic activity, signalling to criminals that it was open season on the neighborhood, and keeping residents from calling police when they saw crimes unfolding. Wilson said police should develop a more expansive set of goals, and not be content with simply busting murderers and

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drug dealers. By vigorously prosecuting small-change crimes like vandalism and graffiti, and by performing social-service functions like helping to get collapsing buildings condemned, cops could give law-abiding residents a sense of neighborhood ownership. By pursuing and jailing criminals for small crimes, the police reduced the number of thugs out on the street likely to commit more violent acts. And when cops won back the streets, residents became less scared about ratting on neighborhood bad guys, which meant the bad guys got arrested more frequently. Wilson's idea turned out, during the late 1990s, to be astoundingly correct, but it came at a cost: Such extra functions required extra enforcers.

The movement took hold in some cities in the early 1990s, with dramatic, well-publicized drops in crime in Boston, New York, and San Diego. But the idea went national in 1994, when President Clinton convinced a supportive Democratic Congress to pass the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) bill, which promised federal grants to help local departments put 100,000 new cops on the street. By 2000, COPS had helped departments hire about 70,000 new officers (upping local police strength by 12 percent nationally), and required that all of the new cops be out on street beats. In those six years, violent crime declined by 46 percent nationally, the most sustained, dramatic decline in the last hundred years.

Richmond Police Chief Andre Parker says he's "dismayed at the current administration's attitude towards local law enforcement." The administration, he said, has not "seemed to grasp what we face."

But it wasn't just the sheer number of cops—by changing the incentives for departments, the COPS program helped change police attitudes. Now, in order to compete for grants, in order to be politically viable, in order to drive down crime rates, in order to look effective and competent, police chiefs had to embrace the principles of community policing. In half a decade, this new approach became gospel for police management seminars and executive sessions. Some larger departments began to require, for the first time, college degrees of recruits— new officers no longer had to be able to simply follow orders, but were expected to deal with a broad range of community problems intelligently and sensibly. "We're talking about a subtle change in the whole culture of policing," Bueermann said.

Richmond was typical. Like many cities, it had a long history of racially charged antagonism between police and residents. By forcing cops out of their cruisers and into the street, the new model made them shake grandmothers' hands and chase down vandals and small-time thieves. It changed the public image of the cop in the city. For the first time, says Major Daniel Goodall of the Richmond police, "It let us show the people in Richmond that we were on their side." Because community policing entailed hiring new patrol cops, more crimes got solved and more criminals got put away. The crime rate began to drop dramatically, and residents, who now knew their local beat cops personally and trusted the department to put thugs in jail, were much more inclined to give tips on criminals and crimes in their neighborhoods.

Community policing also changed the way cops behaved. To win promotion, officers had to internalize the same philosophies that the department needed to display to win grants. And what was most remarkable, nearly stunning, about the Richmond police with whom I spent time last month was the thoroughness with which the department, from chief down to beat officers, had embraced the community policing model—a model almost entirely academic just 15 years ago. It has brought into being a new sort of officer. Lieutenant John Hall talks about cultivating respect from the residents: "The best way to fight crime is to have people trust you enough to report it when it happens, and tell you who did it —who did a particular crime is never a secret within the community." Sgt. Wallis, who is white, thinks his department sometimes focuses too much on the largely black housing projects, where the most visible crime occurs: "We may not be as fair in delivering justice everywhere as we'd like," he says. We're a long way from Mark Fuhrman.

But from the start, President Bush sent a very different message. In the new president's first budget, when the economy had not yet gone entirely in the tank, he zeroed out the funding for the COPS program entirely. (Congressional Democrats were able to restore some funding, but the COPS program's funds for hiring street cops are less than one-sixth the average during the Clinton administration.) For local departments, the cuts could not have come at a worse time. The lousy economy meant state and local governments had a hard time making up the federal funding cuts, and in many cases, city and state funding for cops has been slashed, too.

Caught in a crunch, local departments, understandably, came to see community policing as an add-on; it was more essential that they be able to respond to emergency calls about ongoing crimes. Departments no longer have the extra officers to staff community policing initiatives, and so even those departments most committed to broken-windows principles have had to abandon their programs. "What we're seeing now is broken windows in reverse," says nationally renowned criminologist James Alan Fox of Northeastern University.

In Richmond, with 90 fewer cops on the streets, criminals have gotten more brazen and crime has gotten more public. When the murder rate here was at its lowest, officers say, every

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murder stemmed from the drug trade or domestic disputes. But with fewer officers on the streets, thugs are less scared of a spot search and more willing to carry guns, and Richmond murders have gotten more senseless and surreal. This past June, a man was shot and killed after he jostled a pistol-packing tough while they were waiting in line at an ice cream truck. Detectives searched for some prior connection between the men, but it turned out there wasn't any: The murdered man really had been killed for jostling. That same week, a young mother made a wrong turn and drove into a housing project, her two children in the back seat. A group of young men hanging out in the middle of the road blocked her passage; when she honked for the crowd to move, one of them shot and killed her dead. "It makes you feel like you're losing control, when you get these murders that make no sense," Goodall said, in a softer moment. It also makes local cops feel like they're slipping back into the 1980s.

But police departments now also have new burdens that didn't exist in the 80s. The Bush administration's choice to go to war without a broader coalition has put a huge strain on U.S. military (half of the army's combat troops are now deployed in Iraq). And large numbers of reservists are cops. The Honolulu police department, which is already 291 officers short of full staffing, is sending 150 more officers overseas with the National Guard. San Antonio sent 50 cops off to war. And even one cop can sometimes be crucial to a department. The lone detective in the Crystal River, Fla., police department is back in fatigues, which has seriously hampered law enforcement in Crystal River. Worse still, departments are barred by law from replacing reservists while they're away on military duty—leaving short-handed departments with no option beyond hoping, hard, that they get their people back soon.

At home, too, the war on terror has eroded the strength and effectiveness of local enforcement. Each time the administration brightens the homeland security light from yellow to orange, police departments around the country go into a state of heightened tension—not just in New York and Washington, L.A. and San Francisco, but also in tiny towns like Richmond, Calif., where officers huddle around their port's unloading docks and their chemical plants and oil refineries, their eyes eagle-sharp for suspicious activity.

Not only are such demands eating away at local police budgets, but the security deployments are taking officers away from their primary responsibility: preventing crime. A *Hartford Courant* report found that the Connecticut state police had been forced to cut overtime for its homicide detectives while a sergeant assigned to a homeland security detail had racked up $15,000 in overtime for duties such as baby-sitting the Georgia Tech University football team during a stopover at Bradley International Airport. And a story in *Crain's Chicago Business* suggests that the problem can only get worse: It concluded that most of the police departments in the Chicago area will have to lay off patrolmen because of the costs imposed by homeland security.

But what most worries criminologists is that the momentary problem of higher crime and shrinking forces may institutionalize a retrenchment in policing tactics. The Bush administration's recoil from the philosophy of community policing by choice, coupled with the local police departments' backing away from the practice by constraint, are already undermining the last decade's paradigm shift. It took a decade for the nation's cops to accept community policing, proponents say, and acceptance only came grudgingly, spurred on by a federal-funding carrot. Now that the feds have changed their tune, this revolution may collapse. "The generation I came up with had to have community policing drummed into us," Bueermann said. "I'd hoped the next generation would just sort of assume that this was how policing ought to be conducted. But if we continue to backtrack, that same assumption might not be there any longer."

Homeland Security Guards

For more than a year, the FBI poured its formidable resources into a search for a terror suspect who'd been at the top of its Most Wanted list. The search for the suspect, Eric Rudolph, wanted for deadly bombings of abortion clinics, had narrowed to a rural area of western North Carolina, and the feds were determined to catch him. They sent 200 agents into the area, combing woods over and over. They posted a $1 million reward, hoping that someone in that poor area would rat Rudolph out. They came up so famously empty-handed that their failed search inspired two country-and-western songs and a best selling t-shirt: "Run Rudolph, Run."

A 21-year-old rookie cop in Murphy, N.C., caught Rudolph after he saw him moving evasively behind a Save-a-Lot grocery store. Federal faces stayed red in the arrest's aftermath, as editorialists from local newspapers to the "Today" show pointed out that mundane police work had done what the nation's finest could not: caught one of the country's most wanted terrorists.

Policing experts say there's an important lesson here. The terrorists whom federal agents are most concerned with now may be more likely to come from Afghanistan than Murphy, but terrorism is also a local event—an attack on a local object, by men who have lived in local communities in preparation for the attack. By keeping cops out of the loop on terrorism, the feds may be wasting rare and crucial chances at nabbing terrorists.

Each of the 19 hijackers lived in the United States before the attacks and some of their names ended up in local police notebooks. By failing to link intelligence work with police work, the federal government is needlessly limiting the ways terrorists might be caught—the in-the-course-of-duty door-to-door work of local police can turn up neighborhood leads with national implications.

"Twenty-five years ago, I was a beat cop in the South Bronx, and I knocked on the door of everyone who moved into my neighborhood and introduced myself—the ones who reacted like they had something to hide, I'd keep an eye on," says Joseph Daly, now chair of Criminal Justice at Pace University in New York City. The way to catch terrorists, Daly says, may be similar.

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Federal law enforcement leaders have long struggled with the knotty problem of exactly how much to tell local cops, and now this tension is further heightened by the new questions terrorism raises. The feds need to give local cops enough information to let them solve crimes and make arrests, but they have to be careful not to be too loose with crucial security information. If one local cop happens to be buddies with an al Qaeda sympathizer, the whole American intelligence apparatus could be compromised.

The solution that DHS and the FBI have arrived at makes sense, at least in theory. They've asked each department to designate a homeland security liaison (usually a command officer who's not the chief who then goes through the FBI's most rigorous background check and, if he passes, is cleared to take part in local FBI-run terrorism task forces, which the feds use to spread intelligence and discuss tactics.

In practice, cops say, it doesn't really work—officers are not given names of terror suspects to investigate; the feds wait until they can devote enough resources to an investigation and then run it themselves. Local cops insist this frequently means that leads are tracked too slowly or by investigators sometimes shockingly devoid of local know-how. In the winter of 2001, the FBI used what later turned out to be a dubious tip to stage a sensational, headline-grabbing raid at the Chester, Pa., home of a Pakistani immigrant. The immigrant was the city's health commissioner, whom the feds eventually cleared of any wrongdoing and gave a profuse apology. Policing leaders have frequently made the point that there are 800,000 local policemen in the United States, compared to 11,000 FBI agents. If the feds let local cops take the initial steps in tracking more leads, policing experts have repeatedly argued, the FBI would have more time to follow up on the most promising investigations.

But chiefs around the country have said that the FBI still frequently discounts local police investigations. Testifying before Congress in October, 2002, Baltimore Police Commissioner Edward T. Norris, since retired, talked about an investigation his officers launched against six Middle Eastern men arrested on immigration charges in a bare northwest Baltimore apartment on Sept. 10, 2002. The found literature with references to jihad, brochures from flight schools and maps of Washington's Union Station and New York's Times Square. A federal judge released the men after the FBI did not press for their continued imprisonment. Weeks later, the bureau began to repeat the steps the Baltimore cops had already taken in their earlier investigation. Despite repeated FBI assurances that cops are equal partners in the war against terrorism, local cops say they frequently feel like second-class citizens.

The FBI has at least trusted cops to provide security for potential terrorist targets. But even in this area, liaison officers say, information is limited: They only hear that there's a "threat" and that the local force should step up patrols around essential targets. When they ask how specific the threat was, they're told that's classified. Local police chiefs also say that they're frequently not told when a threat ends, which leaves them running endless, costly patrols of all the local bridges and tunnels. "To protect ourselves adequately, we need to be given more information," said Francis Monahan, a Richmond police major who is his department's homeland security coordinator.

The situation has reached the point that many local police chiefs say they don't trust the feds to be fully honest with them. Two years after September 11, local cops routinely say their best source for news on terrorism and terrorist threats is always "the morning paper, or CNN." Bill Hemby, a retired San Francisco detective who now runs preparedness seminars for local cops, says that federal information comes in so late and is so vague that officers he works with often "doubt that their patrols are needed at all." This spring, the Philadelphia and Seattle chiefs turned down personal pleas from Tom Ridge to increase patrols, on the grounds that the threats cited were too vague to justify the cost.

Local homeland security coordinators and cops further worry that the federal government is mismanaging the training of local officers. The current DHS training model brings single emissaries from local departments to one of four college campuses for four-day tell-em-everything seminars on terrorism. These trainees then act as trainers for the rest of their department. This is very useful for formulating policy; the trainees say they come back knowing enough to help set priorities for local homeland defense. But beat cops say that little useful information filters down to the patrol level. What departments need is not only one special officer federally versed in the ideological abstracts of the roots of Islamic fundamentalism, or how anthrax spreads. They also need each officer to know what to do if a friendly imam tells you he knows a guy who might be planning an attack, or how to respond if you come upon 10 people passed out face down in the middle of a city park.

In order to help instruct their rank and file, local departments have been relying in large part on the hundreds of private vendors who run for-profit terrorism training seminars. There's likely no way that the federal government can directly train every policeman in the nation, so at least some vendors can perform a useful service. The problem is that with nearly all of these vendors new and without reputations in the field, police departments have few means of sorting out the effective programs from the hundreds of solicitations they get. Richmond police major Francis Monahan, in charge of his department's homeland security, remembers a seminar in New York last year billed as comprehensive terrorism education. The instructors talked only about emergency centers, and when they ran out of material they sent the attendees on a tour of New York's temporary Emergency Operations Center. The seminar hadn't accounted for transportation, and so the attending chiefs had to pay for subway fare themselves. "We were command-level people attending, but it was an academy-level operation," Monahan said. Local police departments also feel unprepared when it comes to terrorism safety equipment, where they are under a similar brochure siege but have very little expert guidance. Of all the problems presented by the specter of terrorism, this one might be the easiest to solve. Should DHS put vendors through

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a rigorous certification process, notifying local departments which training and equipment is effective and which isn't, local police chiefs would be profoundly grateful.

Circling the Paddy Wagons

But while Republicans have consistently and actively undermined the ability of cops to catch crooks, Democrats have played enabler, using the opposition pulpit to sound like an echo of President Bush, only a little wimpier—the Democrats have mostly agreed with where the president is going, and are content merely to challenge him on some numerical details. Consequently, the national political debate on domestic preparedness has remained pretty resolutely banal, an outcome that is surprising, given the urgency of the topic. The whole jargoned political debate about "homeland security" and "first responders" has so far revolved around exactly how much protective gear to buy the nation's firefighters and emergency crews. The consistent Democratic line, pressed most forcefully by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) has been to call for about $40 billion more than whatever the Bush administration happens to ask for. It's not a particularly useful debate. The truth is nobody really knows how many more hazmat suits is enough, and no matter what level of gear firefighters and other "first responders" have, someone will always be able to make a halfway compelling case that they could use some more.

The nine Democratic candidates have evidently been briefed on homeland security to the point of Al Gore-ishness, and each has detailed a lengthy position. Howard Dean's is representative, and telling. What we need, Dean argues, is a "circle of preparation, a circle of protection, and a circle of prevention"—words which sound consciously feminized, like they've been expertly focus-grouped with NPR listeners, but don't mean anything operationally. He's short on big ideas and long on detail, which makes his policy sound as if it was assembled from a mass email sent to favored interest groups. Dean wants to modernize Veterans Hospitals, restore $5 billion in Bush budget cuts to the Coast Guard, and more aggressively seek alternative energy sources, to reduce our dependence on bad actors like Saudi Arabia. The other candidates aren't much better: John Kerry summoned a good bulk of the Washington press corps to a Bronx firehouse in early July for what was billed as a "major" speech on homeland security and told them that what America needed was more equipment for fire companies, which managed to make a good point sound like a play for the endorsement of the International Association of Fire Fighters. Kerry "strode to the plate like Babe Ruth," wrote *Salon*'s Nicholas Thompson, "and laid down a bunt." This full-court press of Democratic arguments is unlikely to fire even the most wonkish imagination. "The Democratic candidates start talking about where we have to spend money on cyber-terrorism and port security, and even I stop paying attention," said Jose Cerda, a policing expert at the Democratic Leadership Council.

But while the Bush administration continues to turn cops into thumb-twiddling municipal security guards, and the opposition party uses its biggest platforms to call for the government to pay for more Kevlar vests and better night-vision goggles, violent criminals are growing more brazen and police forces are getting less and less able to check them. The problems have already begun to emerge, sporadically, in some cities around the country, and experts say they will only get worse.

Both the Bush administration and its critics have become fond of forwarding their particular policy proposals by warning darkly of terrorism: We don't know where it's coming from, they say, and we're not even sure we can prevent it. The machinery of murder is far less mysterious. Good cops know where murder comes from, and they know—from long experience—how to reduce it. Over the past decade, terrorism has killed only one-fiftieth as many people as have died because of that standard menace, simple murder.

Working Alone

In Richmond, I'd talked to a shift commander, Lieutenant John Hall, whose patrol had shrunk from 13 officers to 11, and asked him how he'd redeployed his officers —simple, he said. His shift was responsible for eight neighborhood beats; given 13 officers, he had five beats covered by teams of two, and three beats staffed by cops working on their own. Now, two more of the same eight beats had only a single cop to cover them. I asked him whether this made the patrol officers' jobs more difficult. "Well," he said, "one thing we worry about is safety. If you're going into a situation, it's much more dangerous if you don't have a partner there with you."

One week later, just before 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 30, a routine tip came into Richmond's emergency call center—young men were dealing drugs in a crime-heavy section of South Richmond. Douglas E. Wendel, a five-year veteran of the force, responded. On this shift, he was working alone. At Midlothian Turnpike and East 33rd Street, he got out of his cruiser to walk up on the suspected dealers on the corner. But an accomplice of the dealers walked up behind Wendel, took out a gun and shot him in the back of the head. Wendel didn't have time to take his own gun out of its holster.

The crowd scampered away. Bleeding terribly, Wendel crawled back to his cruiser and radioed in. He needed some backup, he said. An hour later, he was dead. The two bullets had torn up Wendel's face so badly that emergency workers at first assumed he'd been shot from in front. He left an 11-year-old son, a 7-year-old daughter and a 4-year-old son.

Wendel was the first Richmond police officer killed on duty in five years. What was remarkable, in the news reports which followed Wendel's death, was South Richmond residents' sense that a cop's death was in some ways inevitable: They knew, better than anyone else, that criminals were winning back the streets. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* quoted one local homeowner as saying guns were easy to buy as soda. Another, a 35-year homeowner told the paper: "Police used to control [crime]. They can't control it now. These young boys aren't scared at all." ●

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Schlep to Judgment

If anything merited an independent inquiry, it was the attacks on 9/11. But not in Bush's Washington.

By Brian Montopoli

In January 2002, Dick Cheney placed a series of phone calls to then-Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. The Senate was preparing to begin limited, closed-door hearings on the intelligence failures that led to the September 11 attacks, and Cheney wanted to warn Daschle that the White House would not take kindly to suggestions from Democrats for a more public inquiry. Over the phone, the vice president implied that calls for wider hearings by Democrats would be met by accusations that they were hampering the war on terror. President Bush repeated the same message soon after, in a closed door meeting with Daschle. In the months following, Democrats, well aware of the credibility gap between the two parties on national security, largely kept their mouths shut.

In May, however, Democrats got some political cover: The families of those killed in the attacks began a push for an independent commission with a much wider scope than the Senate inquiry. "We thought the investigation into our husbands' deaths would be a no-brainer," says Kristen Breitweiser, one of a group of New Jersey widows who banded together to lobby for the commission. "If my husband had been killed in a car accident, there would have been an investigation immediately. This was 3,000 people. We just assumed it would happen." To press the issue, the families went public with their horror stories. In tearful interviews with politicians and members of the press, they produced pictures of their children and recounted stories of final conversations with their spouses. Breitweiser showed lawmakers her husband's wedding band, which had been recovered at Ground Zero, still attached to a piece of his finger. Mindy Kleinberg, another New Jersey widow, told of her conversations with her 11-year-old son in the days after the attack, when the boy insisted that he was willing to take his father back blind, or take him back burnt, so long as he returned.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration continued to argue against the commission. "I think it's the wrong way to go," Cheney told Fox News on May 19. He claimed that national security concerns trumped the families' appeals. Behind closed doors, however, many lawmakers in both parties were outraged by the administration's position. The benefits of a wide-ranging investigation, they said, which would both detail the failures that led to the attacks and make suggestions as to how to address those failures, would surely outweigh the short-term security concerns trumpeted by the administration. Many believed that the real motivation behind the White House's position was its desire to avoid potentially embarrassing revelations about what it might have done to prevent the tragedy.

It was an understandable strategy. In August 2002, details emerged in the press that the Bush administra-

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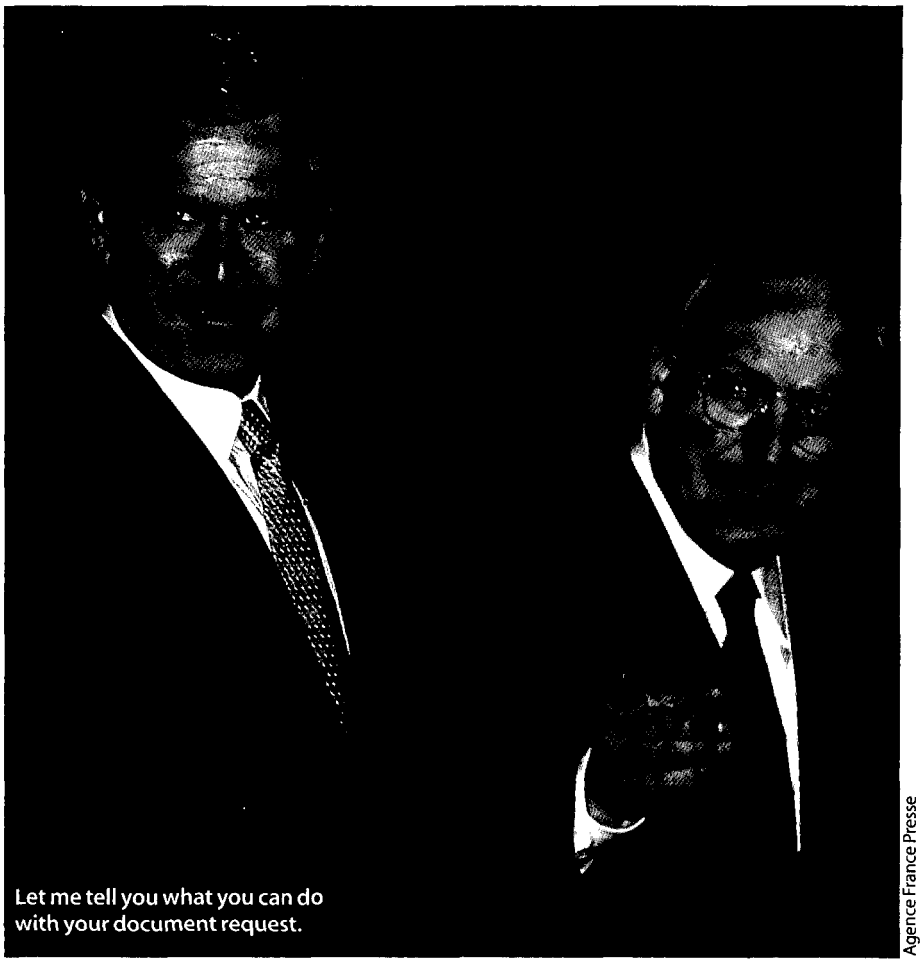
tion had ignored a Clinton-era plan to attack al Qaeda in Afghanistan before the terrorist attacks. Despite the emphatic protestations of then-counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke, the administration had put fighting terrorism low on its list of priorities—thanks in part to hostility towards Clarke, a holdover from the Clinton administration. It was later reported that despite the fact that Osama bin Laden had been spotted by Predator drones as many as three times in late 2000, the administration took no action against him. Weeks before the September 11 attacks, Bush was warned that bin Laden's terrorist network might try to hijack American planes, but the administration continued to promote a missile shield, its top military priority, to counteract, as the president put it, "terrorist threats that face us."



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Agence France Presse

For a president who has staked his popularity on his stance against terrorism, a full airing of these revelations had the potential to be politically devastating. Given the choice between a closed-door joint congressional inquiry over which it could wield influence and an independent commission that would be much harder to control, the White House chose to support the former. In July of this year, when the joint inquiry report was finally released, the cleverness of that strategy became clear. The congressional report had all the hallmarks of a whitewash. Because the investigation had been limited to intelligence failures, most of the blame fell on intelligence agencies, not the White House. Bob Graham and Richard Shelby, who had headed up the inquiry, were aggressive in their investigation, but they were largely kept at bay: When the inquiry petitioned the Bush administration for access to National Security Council documents, for example, they were denied and told that the documents were outside the scope of their investigation. Even then, the administration delayed the release of the report for months, and redacted large portions of it, including a section on terrorist ties to Saudi Arabia's government. The final product represented the results of engineering by the Bush administration to produce a report that minimized political damage.

We've come a long way since the 1990s. Back then, it seemed that almost anything, no matter how frivolous, merited an investigation, from Travelgate to Filegate to Vince Foster. In Bush's Washington, almost nothing seems to merit an independent investigation, no matter how serious. How did false statements about Iraq's supposed ongoing nuclear weapons program and connections to al Qaeda wind up in a State of the Union speech by a president arguing for war? Why did top Bush appointees dismiss or ignore warnings by senior military officers that not enough troops were being deployed to safely occupy post-Saddam Iraq? Why was Halliburton, the energy-services firm formerly run by Vice President Cheney, awarded lucrative, no-bid contracts to rebuild Iraq? Who are the two "senior administration officials" who blew the cover of a covert CIA operative specializing in weapons of mass destruction by revealing her name to conservative columnist Robert Novak?

In almost any other era, such alarming questions would have led to immediate independent inquiries to find the answers. Today, the answers remain shrouded in secrecy. Each bears directly on vital issues of national security, none more so than how the system failed to foresee or protect against terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 Americans on September 11, 2001. Fortu-

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nately, an independent 9/11 commission is now up and running. Unfortunately, it's not clear whether the commission will have the time, resources, and cooperation from the Bush administration to do its job. The story of the commission's creation, in the face of endless obstacles thrown in its way, is an object lesson in how far this administration will go to hide uncomfortable truths, and how, sometimes, ordinary citizens can successfully fight back.

Act I: Witness

In February, with the Bush administration's blessing, a joint committee of Congress formed to hold limited hearings into intelligence failures, but it was controversial from the start. John McCain and Joseph Lieberman had been calling for an independent commission with a more extensive mandate, one that would study aviation safety, immigration policy, and homeland security, since almost immediately after the September 11 attacks. But the administration argued that a broader inquiry was unnecessary and might jeopardize classified information and hobble the nascent war on terror. McCain and Lieberman, joined by Tim Roemer in the House, persisted, introducing legislation to authorize the commission. But with the president's poll numbers sky-high, most legislators were loath to support the measure.

The family members of the victims, however, had no such reservations about speaking out. Their campaign officially began with a June 11 rally at the Capitol that attracted victims' families, supporters, and politicians including Lieberman, Robert Torricelli, and Hillary Clinton. The rally received extensive media coverage and convinced a handful of Republican legislators to back the commission. But midterm elections were just months away, and Democratic pollsters insisted their candidates focus their attention on the economy; the Democrats followed the pollsters' advice, and the legislation was set aside.

But the victims' families pressed the case for a commission in other ways. McCain, Lieberman, and Roemer's staffers would call family members when the bill got stuck, and tell them which congressman or issue needed attention. The victims' families would go to sympathetic members of the press and take the staffers' complaints public. The frustrated family members also took their emotional appeal directly to lawmakers. A group of New Jersey widows, including Breitweiser and Kleinberg, became fixtures on Capitol Hill. When they could not schedule a meeting with a particular senator or congressman, they showed up at his or her office unannounced, in a group of four. If they were told the legislator wasn't available, three of them waited in the office while one stood watch in the hallway outside, in case the congressperson tried to sneak out a side door.

"That actually happened a couple times," says Breitweiser. "We came up with all these strategies. We would stake them out at a lunch-in, or stand in the Senate gallery when they were going to a vote—which I think is illegal. We would just go up to every one of them we could find. These are human beings, people with children and families. It was impossible for them to just ignore us. They have to look you in the eye."

To facilitate the "widow walkabouts," as the women called their trips around the halls of Congress, they carried a photo directory of the legislators, which Breitweiser says she asked to look at in one of the offices and "forgot to give back." In the meetings they did secure, they would tell stories that often left lawmakers emotional. "In the beginning," says Kleinberg, "I think we cried in every meeting. We talked about the kids, showed their pictures. It was obviously a very personal thing for us."

Steven Push, whose wife was killed when American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, took a different tack. He rarely shared personal details with legislators. Instead, Push wrote scores of press releases, started a Web site, maintained an email list of 1,500 families, lobbied lawmakers on Capitol Hill, and developed relationships with the media. He and others members of his organization, Families of September 11, also contacted newspapers around the country. They would tell their stories to the editors, who often wrote blistering editorials criticizing a local politician who opposed the commission.

"We had access to politicians and editors because we were September 11 families, and we didn't want to waste that gift," he says. After he lost his wife, it became impossible for Push to concentrate on his job at a biotech firm, and he decided to work full-time on behalf of the commission. Nonetheless, his subsequent efforts have left him with mixed feelings. "Working on this has been both a duty and a burden," he says. "It's been a way to keep my mind off my grief. The only times I've really felt good since September 11 are when we had some success with the commission. But it has been difficult. You're always focused on 9/11 stuff. It's a constant reminder."

In July, the family members' efforts began to pay small dividends. Roemer again introduced legislation in the House, in the form of an amendment, to establish an independent commission. The amendment called only for a watered-down version of the commission he originally envisioned, one that would be limited only to further analysis of intelligence issues. The Bush administration nonetheless worked behind the scenes to kill it. White House operatives made a flurry of calls urging Republican lawmakers to vote against the bill. Administration-friendly legislators got in on the act, too. They warned Rep. Christopher Smith that a vote in favor of the commission might cost him the chairmanship of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (Smith voted in favor of the amendment, and ultimately kept his chairmanship). The amendment passed, though because of its reduced scope and limited mandate, family members still worried that the commission it created would be largely toothless.

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"It was the day before Thanksgiving, and I remember thinking, 'this is what I have to be thankful for,'" says Beverly Eckert, whose husband was killed in the World Trade Center. "We were just so relieved. And then Bush brings Henry Kissinger into the room. I couldn't believe it."

In the Senate, the families had even less to be happy about. Lieberman and McCain's bill had stalled, and the administration didn't deserve all of the blame. Behind the scenes, prominent Democratic senators on the Intelligence Committee who were involved in the joint congressional inquiry, including Bob Graham and Dianne Feinstein, had opposed the bill, in part because they wanted to stay in the spotlight on the issue.

Act II: Backlash

In the following months, the White House made two crucial mistakes. Graham and Shelby had become increasingly frustrated with the White House's lack of cooperation with the congressional inquiry. Specifically, they complained privately that the Bush administration had failed to provide essential documents. By September, they'd had enough, and joined the families and their legislative allies in calling for an independent commission. Graham and Shelby knew that a commission might be able to get its hands on the information being withheld from the inquiry.

The White House then made its second mistake. They failed to prevent Lieberman from sneaking into the schedule a limited debate on a roll call vote on the bill. This meant any Republican who wanted to stand with the White House against the commission would have to put his name on his opposition. Few Republicans were willing to take this step, fearing voter backlash.

The roll call vote, together with Graham and Shelby's support, made the bill's passage inevitable. The White House decided to reverse its position. White House officials did salvage a small public relations victory: They made the announcement the same day FBI whistleblower Colleen Rowley testified before Congress, which meant that news about the commission was buried in the newspapers the following day.

The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 90-8. But because the House amendment called for a commission with a limited scope, both chambers had to negotiate a compromise. Nonetheless, the family members were overjoyed. Lieberman had quoted Kleinberg in urging his colleagues to vote for the commission, and he echoed other lawmakers in crediting the family members for creating the momentum to pass the bill.

Their enthusiasm didn't last long. The Senate had voted to include the commission as part of its bill to create a Homeland Security Department, but that bill had reached a partisan impasse. Lawmakers then tried to include the provision in the annual bill authorizing intelligence activities, but the demands of the Bush administration—who wanted the investigation to last no more than a year, claimed the president had the right to appoint the commission's chair, insisted on limited subpoena power, and demanded control over the commission's final report—meant that the parties could not reach a consensus. The White House was happy to allow the brewing war with Iraq to focus the press' attention elsewhere. "They were trying to drag the negotiations out in order to kill it," says one congressional staffer who worked closely with the White House. "It was just an incredibly laborious, drawn out process to try to get a compromise. I didn't think it was going to happen."

After family members criticized the White House for its tactics, White House spokesman Scott McClellan denied that the administration was trying to derail the commission. He said that the White House was working with Congress "to get the commission up and running as quickly as possible and to do so in a way that accommodates the concerns we have heard in meetings with families of the victims."

Act III: Doublecross

In fact, the White House played a central role in keeping a negotiated deal from happening. Aides to Porter Goss, the chairman of the House intelligence committee who was working largely on behalf of the administration, met much more opposition in conference from Democrats and some Republicans than they had anticipated. Goss's aides threatened to move forward unilaterally with plans for a commission that fit the White House's specifications. Shelby, Graham, and Nancy Pelosi immediately asked for a meeting with Goss, and, in order to prevent such action, agreed to many of the administration's demands. Lawmakers then held a press conference heralding the deal, with family members looking on from the audience. It was a triumph for the families, but it would be short-lived. Soon after the press conference, Cheney called Goss and instructed him to "keep negotiating"—in other words, renege on the agreement that had been forged. Goss would later tell a conference committee that the instructions to go back on the deal came from "above my pay grade," though he claimed afterward that he was referring to other House leaders, not the vice president. He later denied he had signed off on the agreement at all.

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Condemnation of the White House was swift. "The question we want to pose to the White House today is: 'Do you really want to allow this commission to be created? And if you don't, why not?'" asked Lieberman. Pelosi said that after the agreement was reached, "almost immediately the invisible hand came down," and complained that "the White House is professing openly to support an independent commission—(but) privately they're moving to thwart the commission." Roemer said that "the White House is trying to pull the carpet over the independent commission and do the slow roll and kill it."

McClellan noted that the commission could be created "very quickly if certain members will reconsider their opposition to a truly bipartisan commission."

On Nov. 5, Republicans triumphed in midterm elections. With a lame-duck Congress in office, the House rejected inclusion of the commission in the Homeland Security legislation, and Republicans blocked a similar action in the Senate. It appeared as though the proposal was finished. On the evening of Nov. 14, however, after furious negotiations, the administration finally agreed to a deal. It was largely tailored to White House specifications—the president would appoint the chair, and six out of 10 of the bipartisan commission's members would be needed for a subpoena—but congressional supporters of the bill were able to secure some concessions, including the fact that the probe was set to last 18 months, six months more than the administration wanted. The White House had been concerned that a longer probe, such as the two years suggested by the families, might generate embarrassing revelations in the run up to the 2004 elections. The administration felt that the deal was in its best interest, insiders say, because it gave them significant control over the makeup and structure of the commission. This was clearly a concern: The White House felt so strongly about the commission's makeup that it sent Nicholas Calio, its lead congressional liaison, to negotiate.

The New Jersey widows decided to boycott the bill-signing with the president. "I did not want to stand there for a photo-op with that man," says Breitweiser. Many family members were present; however, they knew that Bush was planning to announce whom he had chosen to chair of the commission at the signing, and they were eager to discover who it would be. "It was the day before Thanksgiving, and I remember thinking, 'this is what I have to be thankful for,'" says Beverly Eckert, whose husband was killed in the World Trade Center. "We were just so relieved. And then Bush brings Henry Kissinger into the room. I couldn't believe it."

Act IV: Sabotage

The White House could have selected any number of other candidates who would have been just as sympathetic to White House concerns, but would not have elicited the controversy or media attention that came with the choice of Kissinger. A former secretary of state, Kissinger had orchestrated a covert bombing campaign against Cambodia and a coup against democratically elected Chilean leader Salvadore Allende during the Nixon administration. He had, since 1969, wiretapped journalists and colleagues and encouraged Nixon to prosecute the newspapers that had published the Pentagon Papers. Critics charged that even by the Bush administration's standards, this was a shocking choice, one perhaps destined to signal that the commission would not be allowed to stray far from the president's control.

Family members, Democrats, and pundits condemned the choice; Maureen Dowd, echoing the prevailing conventional wisdom, wrote in *The New York Times* that you appoint Kissinger only "if you want to keep others from getting to the bottom of something." This bit of hubris from the administration proved too much: Kissinger resigned less than three weeks after he had taken the job, pushed out by mounting public pressure and his unwillingness to release a list of his consulting clients, some of whom may have posed a conflict of interest. Once again, as it had by stiff-arming Sens. Shelby and Graham, the White House had overreached. This time, the Kissinger mistake meant that the White House was forced to select as his replacement the politically moderate Republican Thomas Kean, who was expected to be a far more independent investigator.

But the commission was slow to begin its work. Staffing was an arduous process, and many of the staff members who did get hired had to wait for security clearances before beginning their most essential work. Further, the White House, CIA, Defense Department, and FBI were initially slow to respond to commission requests for millions of government documents, requests that were not made until more than six months after the commission formed. Because the Bush administration dragged its feet on declassifying the joint inquiry report, which the commission was supposed to use as a basis for its investigation, staffers and commissioners had to make a special trip to the Ford House Office Building to view it. According to one commissioner, that inconvenience meant that some commissioners did not read the inquiry report for months. Tim Roemer, who had become a commissioner, was kept from reviewing transcripts of some of the inquiry's closed-door hearings so that White House lawyers could check if the president wanted to invoke executive privilege to keep the information secret. With a final report due by May 27, 2004, commissioners faced the task of addressing a diverse array of issues, including aviation security, intelligence failures, communications breakdowns, and immigration policies, with little time and even less cooperation. Family members knew that the administration could stonewall the commission into near uselessness.

"This thing has a deadline," says Push. "If they want to make the commission fail, they'll do what they did with the joint inquiry—stall in providing information, and make it virtually impossible for them to get their work done in the time given."

In addition, the commission was given just $3 million

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with which to do its work.

"In 1996, we had a commission to study casino gambling in America, and the Congress appropriated $5 million for it," says New Jersey Sen. Jon Corzine. "If we can spend $5 million on a commission to study casino gambling, I think we ought to be able to put serious resources into finding out why 3,000 Americans lost their lives." The administration appropriated $50 million to study the space shuttle Columbia disaster, in which seven people were killed. Eventually, after public haggling, McCain convinced Sen. Ted Stevens, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, to spend $11 million to fund the commission. But even the commission's increased budget was seen by many experts as insufficient for the work it had to do.

Act V: Capitulation

The new funding galvanized the commission. In July, commissioners began a coordinated attack on the White House. First, they orchestrated a campaign of leaks that resulted in news stories criticizing the Bush administration for impeding the investigation. Then, on July 8, Kean and Vice Chair Lee Hamilton, a former Democratic congressman from Indiana, issued an interim report containing complaints that they had received only a tiny portion of the millions of documents they had requested from federal agencies, such as the Pentagon and the Justice Department. (The White House had little wiggle room here, because each member of the panel had signed the interim report.) The panel also lamented the fact that government officials could not be interviewed without the presence of their colleagues, a tactic that Kean said was tantamount to "intimidation." Privately, the commission also made clear that they did not want to have to issue subpoenas for the documents, which would embarrass the administration even further.

It was a well-timed political move by the commissioners. The press was busy attacking the White House over missing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and, for the first time in months, Bush's administration felt politically vulnerable. The commission was desperate to get its hands on National Security Council documents that had been denied to the congressional inquiry (though some documents were leaked to Bob Woodward, who quoted them extensively in his book *Bush At War*). Faced with the prospect of subpoenas and more bad press, the administration gave in. Suddenly, says a commissioner, the administration began saying yes to requests it had been denying, and the commission began operating at full capacity. The commission has already gotten some juicy stuff. Particularly telling, one commissioner says, are the NSC documents, "hair-raising stuff" from immigration, and information from the debriefing of detainees from the Afghan war.

Despite the newfound cooperation it is getting from the White House, major challenges await the September 11 commission. With so little time to do its work (the report is due next May), the commission may not be able to hold many important but time-consuming public hearings and instead conduct the bulk of their inquiries behind closed doors. (To understand what a benefit this could be to the Bush administration, imagine how different the Watergate and Iran-Contra hearings would've been without public hearings). The commission is still radically underfunded; and while the White House is producing a large volume of documents, it is unclear whether the most potentially damaging ones are among them. One Senate aide says the "litmus test" will be whether the commission gets the August 6 briefing in which Bush was supposedly told that al Qaeda was planning to fly planes into buildings. The White House managed to keep the joint congressional report from going public for seven months, citing national security concerns. If they manage to do the same with the September 11 commission report, it won't be released until after the upcoming presidential election.

Epilogue

The experience so far of the September 11 commission offers several key lessons about the new rules that exist in Bush's Washington. The first is that events that in any other era would have led to independent investigations as a matter of course no longer do. Pearl Harbor, the Kennedy assassination, the Challenger disaster, the Iran-Contra scandal: After each of these events, independent investigations were launched to get to the bottom of what had happened. "There is an old tradition in this country of thorough, immediate after-action reports when we've sustained losses," says one September 11 commissioner. "It is unbelievable to me that after one of the greatest defeats in our history, we're only really starting the inquiry now, 22 months later."

The second lesson is that congressional investigations are no substitute for an independent inquiry, especially when the party running Congress also controls the White House. Even the Senators who ran the congressional investigation of September 11 came to the conclusion (rightly, it turned out) that only an independent commission with subpoena power would be equipped to get at the truth of what went wrong before September 11. Right now, congressional committees are investigating how false statements about Iraq's nuclear programs made it into the president's State of the Union address. But if the joint congressional inquiry into 9/11 is any guide, these latest Hill inquiries are likely to be blocked before they become too embarrassing to the president.

The final lesson is a more hopeful one, though only slightly so: Independent inquiries can still take place, but only with sufficient pressure from outside the Beltway to overcome the Bush administration's ruthlessness and the Democrats' weakness. The 9/11 commission is up and running for one reason only: The relentless effort of the families of those killed on September 11. An independent investigation into possible manipulation of intelligence data in the run-up to the Iraq war is equally vital to the nation's security. It probably won't happen, however, if Bush's Washington is left to itself. ◆

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Notes From the Underground

What the ailing record industry can learn from a successful subway musician.

By Nicholas Thompson

Every two weeks or so, I pack up my Taylor acoustic guitar, fill my backpack with CDs of my music, and head down into the New York City subways to busk away. I make good money, and I get to watch and study people, too. For example, I can now tell from about 50 feet away whether a woman is likely to give me money.

If she's walking fast, wearing headphones, angrily porting a briefcase, or chasing down one of her children, that's an easy no. She wouldn't throw a dime into Jimi Hendrix's case. Other women, who are more aware of their surroundings, have greater possibility. Usually it boils down to makeup and midriffs. If the woman is decked out, she may look at me, but only to see if I'm looking at her. But if a woman is dressed casually, walking slowly, and thinking about something beside herself, she's likely to listen for at least a few moments, and then I have a decent chance she'll enjoy the music, stop, and maybe buy an album.

This is but one of the lessons I've learned from performing in train stations that I think could be helpful to the floundering music industry, or at least to the many talented musicians stifled by it. These lessons haven't gotten me rich, but I've sold about 500 records in the subways playing sporadically since releasing my new album in January. I make more money down there per hour than I do as a journalist. And while my sales and profits have gone up, the music industry's have gone down. Sales of recorded music in the United States have dropped by more than a 100 million units in the past two years, and, after decades of steady gains, industry revenues have dropped 15 percent over the last three years.

Different experts will give different reasons for the decline. The music industry itself blames its customers, or more specifically young people who download music for free from increasingly popular file-sharing networks. Others, such as Josh Bernoff of Forrester Research, blame competition from video games and other entertainment. Whatever the reason, it's clear that the music industry's old model of doing business isn't working so well in today's market. That old model relied on labels plucking out a handful of bands they believed would sell big, and investing millions of dollars in production, promotion, and marketing to get them the time on the radio dial or the space in the record stores they required to catch fire. The industry defended itself against complaints by saying they were simply meeting the demands of popular taste.

In truth, there was always a tautological element to this argument. The music industry functions like a cartel, and the public's preferences have always been limited by the choices they were given. Now that the market for music has changed, and CD sales are declining, the record industry is hiring lawyers and lobbyists to squelch the new technologies that are changing the music business. Over the last few months, the Recording Industry Association of America has issued hundreds of subpoenas to college kids who swap music over the Internet. Meanwhile, the industry's lobbyists have convinced Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), himself a songwriter, to float the idea of allowing companies to remotely slag computers whose owners used them to download movies and songs.

But the industry's efforts are counterproductive. About 60 million people in the United States have already swapped copyrighted material over the Internet, and that number isn't likely to shrink. The times are a changin', and record companies should learn to how to profit in this new environment. With all the modesty required of a guy who doesn't make enough money on a given night to buy front-row seats at a Mariah Carey concert, let me offer a few pointers.

Number One: Drop the price of CDs

When I first started playing in the subways, I experimented with different prices for my albums: $2, $5, $8, $10. I sold slightly more CDs at $2, but far fewer at $8 or $10. The sweet spot seemed to be a price of $5. Later, I gave up pricing my CDs altogether when I got a ticket for selling CDs in the NYC subways. Now I post a sign saying that my CDs are technically free, but they cost something to make, and people should pay what they want. Occasionally someone will take one for free. Sometimes a passerby will drop $20 into my guitar case. But the mean, median, and mode are all, again, $5.

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This could merely be the measure of what my music is worth. But my strong sense is that five dollars is what people will pay for a CD they like by a musician that they've never heard of.

So why does the average CD sell for more than $17? It's not the manufacturing cost. My last album cost me about $1.10 for each CD manufactured. I had high quality work done at every step, from the mastering to the packaging. People who print larger runs have vastly lower costs.

True, recording solo acoustic guitar is vastly easier than a full band, but even industry-produced acoustic guitar albums sell for that price. That means the companies are either reaping cartel prices or most of the money is just going to the layers of middlemen: the redundant producers paid by the hour to fine-tune albums, the marketers, and the promotional photo shoots. If you're U2 or the Rolling Stones and sell millions of albums, such expenses may be perfectly worthwhile. But drooping industry sales figures and my own experience suggest that for the vast majority of artists, the industry is going to have to drop the price of its CDs—maybe not to $5, but certainly closer to that than to $17.

Number Two: Branch out

The beauty of the subway system is that it's about as free a market as there is. If I play good songs that I'm passionate about and that I have down cold, I make money. If I play junk, I don't make a dime. Naturally, though, I've had to learn a few things about how to place myself. The New York City subway has two good places for musicians to perform: the platforms where the trains stop, and the hallways leading between platforms and up to street level. The advantage of a hallway is that everyone passing by hears you for a few seconds; in a platform, you get far fewer people, but they hear you longer.

Hallways, it turns out, work great for playing music that's instantly familiar. In my favorite station, there's frequently a talented hallway musician who plays Beatles songs, the kind of music that in three notes can jar a pleasant memory for a huge number of people. The instrumental guitar music I play, on the other hand, is a little unusual. To people who know the genre, it sounds like a poor man's version of Leo Kottke or Michael Hedges. To people who don't know the genre, it's a poor man's version of Duane Allman's Little Martha or Jimmy Page's Bron-y-aur. In any event, it's fairly complicated, and I literally don't make a penny when I try to play in the spot where the Beatles troubadour sings. But on a platform where I have roughly three minutes between trains coming, I can get folks' attention long enough to make some sales.

One might think that my only audience would be the Birkenstock nature-lovers and 14-year-old kids porting around their first guitars—and I do do well with that crowd. But I also do well with middle-aged black couples, 40-year-old white couples with kids, white blue-collar workers, and the Ecuadorian immigrants who sell jewelry in my favorite station. In fact, I have a much better chance of telling whether someone will like the music based on the way that they walk than based on their age, sex, or apparent income.

The music industry tends to divide both bands and audiences into broad, set formats: alt-music, hip-hop, and modern country. There is an obvious reality to these categories, but in truth, they exist largely for the benefit of record companies, which can then narrow and target their promotion efforts. Unfortunately, most bands and artists can't get to first base unless their music fits one of these formats, and there are many other bands and other types of music-like mine-that don't fit into any set genres. Many people's tastes stretch well beyond formats, and might they want to buy some of this music if they heard it. Indeed, it's almost guaranteed that somewhere between these formats, the next big thing in music is brewing. But figuring out how to profitably micro-market heterogeneous bands to scattered audiences is something the music industry has not yet figured out how to do.

Number Three: Embrace file-sharing

Fortunately, the Internet allows a wide audience to inexpensively sample a huge array of music. File-sharing networks like Kazaa, and artists who allow free downloads off their Web pages, are roughly like playing in the subway. The Net allows artists access to a substantial potential audience at almost no marginal cost, while providing listeners with short samples of a wide variety of artists and musical styles they may not hear on the radio with a low investment of time and almost no investment of money.

As I'm writing this, my computer is downloading songs by Nigerian afro-pop innovator Fela Kuti in anticipation of a trip to a museum show about him. Last night, I tried to download music from several artists currently performing in New York to decide if I wanted to see any of them live. Unfortunately, I couldn't find free downloads of most of their music, so I watched a movie instead. I was happy, though, when I saw that someone had downloaded a song off my album.

That's a risk, but it's one worth taking. I profit tremendously when people download my songs. It makes them more likely to pay to come to my concerts. It helps raise my profile and makes it more likely that people will call radio stations to request my songs—which could one day be a source of album sales and my ultimate transition from a *Washington Monthly* contributing editor into a major music icon.

Big artists do indeed lose with file sharing, and it's their profits on which the industry depends for survival. That's why they're fighting it so hard. But it's a fight they will eventually lose, and that won't be a bad thing either for bands or fans. Eventually, much as the movie industry eventually figured out how to profit from the VCR, record companies should look harder to find ways to make money off of the Internet—probably once they learn to be more nimble and pay more attention to the particular tastes of a diverse audience. Meanwhile, file sharing helps small artists with limited distribution find their audience and make a decent living—a truer expression of the free market in music. If everyone could download tracks from groups playing in their city that weekend, the best band would draw the most fans and a lot of unknown bands would surge. That may scare big groups who have become popular under the current system, but it shouldn't scare fans or scare the industry. Record companies will just have to get better at serving their customers. ◆

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Kiss & Makeover

The case against the case against tube tops.

By Sarah Wildman

Flip through any consumer magazine today, and you'll find numerous "makeover" ads. These typically juxtapose the before and after pictures of, say, a head-to-toe shot of a woman whose belly is bulging over her bikini bottom and another shot of her new svelte and toned physique, promising you the same transformation if only you buy the cellulite cream or diet pills being hawked. This form of sales pitch isn't new. Corset ads from a hundred years ago also advertised their products with unseemly before and appealing after images—engravings, not photos, in that day. Since the middle of the last century, the concept of the before and after has spread throughout popular culture to movie plots and daytime TV, from the heroine of the 1954 Audrey Hepburn vehicle, *Sabrina*, who goes away to Paris a poor girl and comes back so fashionable she wins the rich boy to Nia Vardalos's transformation in 2002's *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* from a frumpy diner hostess into a sharp-dressing travel agent to the makeover specials that are a staple of talk shows like "Oprah" and "Ricki Lake." The concept is now even applied to homes on "Trading Spaces," a popular show in which a drab living room or bedroom is transformed into a splendid interior through the elbow grease of its owners' neighbors, a carpenter, a designer, and $1,000.

As with the cosmetic ads of last century, the appeal of these new shows is aspirational. The promise of the makeover story is that no one has to stay stuck in his or place, that we don't have to settle for how we look today—we can change it all tomorrow. People can move up the ladder of life with a little determination and effort (and some cash to purchase whatever product is being sold).

The latest spin on the fashion makeover is "What Not to Wear" on The Learning Channel, the same station that gave us "Trading Spaces." What makes this show different is that the person being made over hasn't volunteered for the transformation—the subject is virtually forced into it, presumably for his or her own good. Each episode begins like this: A badly-dressed person, usually a woman, is recommended by friends, family, or co-workers to the network. With the help of hidden cameras, the unsuspecting naif is then surreptiously videotaped for two weeks as she runs around in flannel shirts and frumpy jeans, after which the show's hosts watch the videos, murmur their horror and plan an intervention. Together, the hosts descend upon their "victim" (as they call her) in some public place. When the cameras find this person, invariably sitting with the so-called friends who set her up, the hosts tell her that friends and family have selected her for a makeover on "What Not to Wear." When the victim hears the title of the show, she usually drops her head in shame and humiliation, until she hears that she will be given $5,000 to remake her wardrobe in New York City.

The hosts set strict rules for their victims: No pants that taper at the ankle, cashmere cashmere cashmere, think of brown as a neutral color, etc. For each person there is the tailored snide comment: The slut, for example, will be told not to show "it all," to keep some of "it" hidden, and not to go so tight, while the opposite rules usually apply for the housewife. Humiliated, the ill-dressed one then makes her or his way into the city for one day of shopping alone and one day of shopping with the hosts, armed with a fist full of cash. The camera pans up to big name stores—Barneys, Saks, Searle—as the victim is escorted in and out of fancy shops and the hosts coo in her ear about how much better she's looking already, just holding a $500 leather jacket. Following her shopping spree, the victim gets a cut-n-color and professional makeup application, after which she travels back to home for the traditional "reveal" moment before friends and family. In a video diary, the originally feisty fashion victim relays how she has come to realize the error of her old ways.

One can't watch the show without thinking that the "victims" really do benefit from a fashion makeover overall, and it's fun to watch it happen. Yet there's something fundamentally mean about the show, which is no surprise given its origins. Like so many other shows with a caustic attitude, from "The Weakest Link" to "Big Brother" and "American Idol," "What Not To Wear" is a British import. And like these other programs, it seems to be catching fire with the American public. "What Not To Wear" drew an average of 2.7 million viewers for each of its first 10 episodes, despite being tucked away at 10 p.m.

Sarah Wildman is a Washington, D.C., writer.

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on Saturday nights. The success of the show has prompted TLC to pick up the program for a second season, filming 45 new episodes and bumping it into a better time slot. Don't blame the producers for its brand of acerbic humor. The success of "What Not To Wear" indicates it is effectively tapping into changes in American culture. One is the spread of snobbery—once a characteristic relatively confined to the upper middle classes—down the income scale. Apparently, it is no longer enough to aspire to style; one must now look down on those without it. The other trend on which the show draws is the prevalent notion that any mild personality quirk can be deemed a condition requiring professional treatment. No longer a matter of personality or personal choice, idiosyncrasies from mild social phobia to excessive pessimism are now seen as abnormal tendencies, requiring quasi-medical intervention.

Sparkly White Lipstick

The signature conceit of "What Not To Wear" is that the "victims," because they haven't volunteered for this ordeal, must be shocked into realizing that they do, in fact, require a radical change. Before she can spend her money, the victim is taken to the New York City studio, and forced to revisit her mistakes in a session inside a "360-degree mirror" that "doesn't lie." This is the moment where the unstylish victim is forced to try on all the awful clothes she brought to New York, while the hosts exclaim that they can't imagine why anyone would buy such schlock. Outfits are tried on and made fun of until it's time for their ritual burning. The approach is styled rather like a drug intervention.

Take, for example, the story of Ann, a 42 year-old stay-at-home mom and volunteer worker who, the Web site tells us, is living the "American dream." Save one important thing: She hasn't bought clothes in years. She wears hand-me-down cords and big shapeless sweaters, one of which is adorned with large stars of David across the back. On her video diary, a voiceover intones, "Before Ann's transition can take place, she's got to be shocked into submission." Ann's shock is that she can't imagine spending good money—the $5K—on herself. "Can't I just take people out to eat with it," she asks, plaintively, "or on vacation?" By the end of Ann's episode, the formerly dowdy Jersey girl is certainly more stylish. Now she has sleek, fitted trench coats, miniskirts, knee-high boots, and Cosabella thong underwear to hide any panty-lines. Her hair is coiffed and gelled, rather than bushy and unmanageable. In her video diary Ann tells us, "I've come so far in just a few days. I realize I'd been shortchanging myself." And one of the giddy hosts exclaims, "See, soccer moms can be sexy!"

Another "What Not To Wear" "victim" is Jen, a college student from Miami, Fla. with platinum blond waist-length hair and a body she isn't afraid to flaunt. The hosts ambushed Jen in a restaurant, embarrassing her with cries of "Jennifer! Jennifer in a tube top!" as they rushed past the other diners. At first resisting the hosts' attempts to remake her according to the tastes of upscale New Yorkers, Jen was ornery on her trips to some of the city's fanciest boutiques, complaining to her cameraman and flaunting the clothes she bought that missed the mark. But Jen eventually fell into line, finally consenting to give up her sparkly white lipstick, hot pants, and leopard-print halter dresses, but she balked at cutting back her mane. From the standpoint of the hosts and producers of "What Not To Wear," the only correct way for a woman to dress is in sleek lines that demurely hint at sexuality, a sensibility which unites an upscale, upper-class New York aesthetic with a middle-class sense of propriety and decency—both of which are viciously scornful of low-class "trailer trash" or "slutty" apparel.

The show's hosts reserve their cruelest mockery for bourgeois "victims" who don't dress their class. Larry, the only man who's been ambushed thus far, is a successful businessman who dresses in awful clothes from "thrift stores." In another episode Lilli, a law student is told she dresses "like a homeless person." Both are remade to reflect their careers. Christine, whom one host pronounces a "Hobbit" in her before videos, complains that she's a back-room secretary whom no one sees—so why bother with a makeover? The hosts are horrified. Obviously, if only she dressed better, Christine could advance her career. Again and again victims are chided for going straight to the sale racks.

Somehow I don't always find it uplifting to see the formerly resistant fashion victim submit to the hosts' dictates in the end. In her video diary, the voiceover tells us that, before, Ann was a "frumpy suburban mom" (ouch!) who just needed someone to tell her that she is beautiful. Though she's convincingly remade to look glamorous and sophisticated, I wonder just what was so terribly wrong with the frumpy original Ann, whose identity was more defined by her incredible philanthropic gestures—she trains seeing-eye dogs, among other things, it's hard to go more heart-of-gold than that—than by her wardrobe. What exactly was misguided about her quirky choices and baggy sweaters, besides being out of sync with the dictates of Madison Avenue fashionistas—especially when Ann is not even a Manhattanite herself? The old Ann's preference for spending money on charity instead of fashion is at least as noble a choice as any. Even her husband seems a bit disconcerted by the new style-conscious Ann. Though he set her up, he admits to being somewhat concerned that she's become someone he can't compete with. "I'm going to have to upgrade my lifestyle," he says, with a worried laugh, upon her return.

Given the high price of her new winter wardrobe, it's not clear whether she'll keep up her new image come summer season. She and her husband seem like a sweet couple; for their sake, I'm rooting for Ann to keep some of her old baggy T-shirts and save her spare cash for a much-needed vacation. ◆

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On Political Books

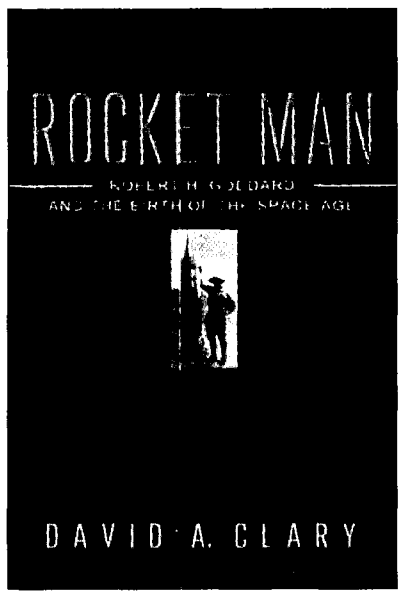
Fighting Gravity

Robert Goddard's ego soared higher than his missiles.

By Gregg Easterbrook

Aviation Week and Space Technology, the Bible of the aerospace business—insiders call it *Aviation Leak and Space Terminology*—just named its top 100 figures in the development of flight. Glenn Curtiss was number five, one slot ahead of Charles Lindbergh, and you've never heard of Glenn Curtiss, have you? (In 1909, he founded the first aircraft manufacturing firm, and did much of the applied engineering that made early aircraft possible.) The Wright Brothers were first, of course, and Wernher von Braun, German aviation pioneer and designer of the V-2 rocket, was second. Da Vinci was fourth, a pretty high finish for a guy who only made sketches. Robert Goddard finished third.

Goddard, according to the new biography *Rocket Man*, was the most famous scientist in America during the early 20th century, better known than Einstein, and also the most revered inventor, more highly regarded than Edison. Newspapers headlined his every pronouncement, and were doing so years before Goddard launched the first-ever liquid-fueled rocket, sending it aloft from his aunt Effie's cabbage patch in Auburn, Mass. Many believed, *Rocket Man* asserts, that "probably no figure in the history of science had a greater vision than Robert Goddard," born a sickly boy—he didn't graduate from high school until age 21—in a time before powered flight, and as a man attempting to design rockets that would reach the moon. The public revered Goddard even when he lost his touch in the 1930s, his prototype rockets performing poorly as the Germans leaped ahead. American setbacks in World War II were widely blamed in public debate on government failure to listen to Goddard; when, 15 years after his 1945 death, the U.S. government awarded his widow $1 million for infringing on Goddard's patents, the decision caused a sensation.



Rocket Man: Robert A. Goddard and the Birth of the Space Age
By David A. Clary
Hyperion, $24.95

Rocket Man, by David Clary—a historian who teaches at Eastern New Mexico State University, located in Roswell, where Goddard performed many of his rocketry experiments in the years before aliens landed there—provides a solid, informative summary of Goddard's life. It is an important work, though Clary spends too much time obsessed with the topic that obsessed Goddard himself: namely, who should get credit for the early developments in rocketry. The book is as much an attempt to weigh this topic as a biography; in its 260 pages we learn a great deal about the legal arguments over Goddard's patents but comparatively little about Goddard himself. Goddard comes off as a self-centered, shallow person who cared only about honors and newspaper headlines. Maybe that's what he was, but wasn't there some sense of adventure in his heart as well? Clary makes his subject, who walked through history as few ever did, surprisingly bland.

Goddard, Clary reports, spent his boyhood and young adulthood in Massachusetts fooling around with chemicals, contraptions, and, especially, firing off hand-built versions of the short-range, solid-fueled rockets that existed at the turn of the 20th century. By 1915, he was a professor of physics at Clark University, and had designed numerous ways to improve the power and guidance of rockets. Next, Goddard proved experimentally that a rocket engine could generate thrust in a vacuum (i.e., in space), something that

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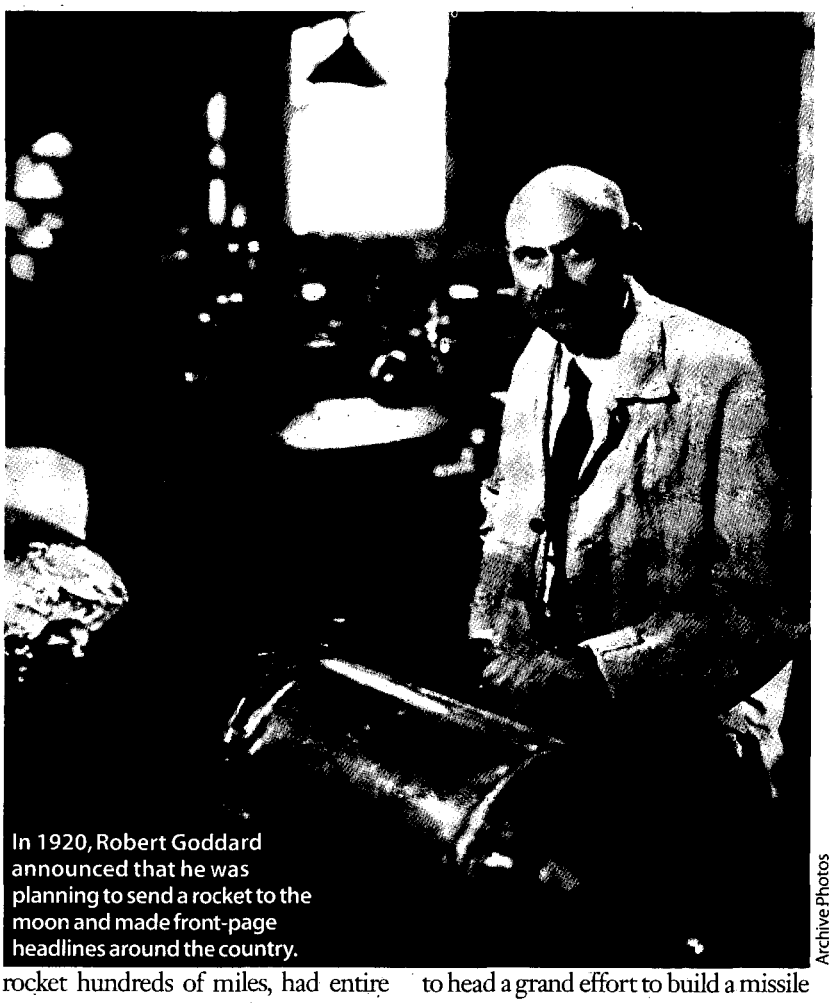
seems obvious now but was controversial at the time. (*The New York Times* demonstrated the media's ignorance of physics in a famed wrong-headed editorial that basically called Goddard a lunatic for saying rockets could work in a vacuum, denouncing him for "lack[ing] the knowledge ladled out daily in high schools.") In 1919, the Smithsonian published a paper by Goddard supposing that "extreme altitude"—space—could be reached by a multiple-stage liquid-fueled rocket. This dryly written technical paper made national headlines.

The next year, Goddard announced that he was planning to hit the moon with a rocket. His announcement was front-page news around the country, taken at face value even though Goddard at the time had no rocket capable of going a few hundred feet, let alone the 238,000 miles to the moon. Goddard assiduously cultivated reporters, *Rocket Man* says, and developed around himself the kind of great-man aura that enabled him to talk grandly about flights to the moon and be taken seriously, without any reporter, apparently, ever saying, "Um, doc, could I get a look at this rocket?" In 1926, Goddard's first liquid-fueled creation flew, and it was a breakthrough moment in science—for reasons that can be skipped here, liquid fuel promised a degree of power unthinkable for the fireworks-like rockets of the time. Goddard's first flight of a liquid-fueled rocket will always be one of the leading moments in science, though the little machine, about the size of a telephone booth, barely got above the tree line.

In the years that followed, Goddard launched variations on his initial designs, moving to Roswell, a place he didn't like, in order to have miles of open desert in which a malfunctioning prototype might fall. But though Goddard developed many technical improvements during the 1930s, his work hit a wall. It wasn't until 1937 that he got a rocket to fly straight up one mile, and his goal of reaching space was never even close to realization. One problem was that Goddard generally worked alone, while the Germans, who by 1944 would be firing the large V-2 rocket hundreds of miles, had entire engineering teams working on each component.



In 1920, Robert Goddard announced that he was planning to send a rocket to the moon and made front-page headlines around the country.

Archive Photos

The appearance in September 1944 of the V-2 sent Goddard into a fury. He believed the Germans had stolen his ideas—the V-2 looked like a pumped-up version of a 1930s Goddard design—and angrily accused them of intellectual property theft, as if this nicety would be observed by anyone during war. Goddard wrote letters to newspapers, saying that he deserved credit for the V-2. After his death, his widow spent years traveling the country, presenting a speech about Goddard's life that asserted he should receive credit for nearly every rocket development that occurred worldwide while he was alive.

The appearance of the V-2 also sent Lindbergh into a fury. During the 1920s, he had befriended Goddard; the jet engine had not yet been invented, and Lindbergh had thought the future of aviation lay in rocket propulsion. As World War II began, Goddard wanted to head a grand effort to build a missile weapon, and was bitter when the Pentagon turned him down. (Goddard did contribute to the war effort by designing the bazooka.) After the V-2 flew, Lindbergh accused Washington of deliberately blocking Goddard's attempt to let the allies get the long-range missile first, handing the Germans a grave advantage in the war.

Yet V-2s, while a terrifying cause of civilian deaths in London and Antwerp, had no military significance. Historians have argued that Germany would have been better off if it had never had a missile program, and had instead channeled those resources into building fighters and bombers, since the Wehrmacht ended up routed in the air war. America's lack of an equivalent to the V-2 program may have been one reason the United States prevailed in World War II. American aviation resources were dedicated to conventional aircraft that overwhelmed the Luftwaffe; if we'd listened to Goddard and spent the money on rockets, the

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outcome might have been unhappy.

Lindbergh, who carried many forms of dislike for the U.S. government, campaigned after Goddard's 1945 death on the notion that the Pentagon had committed a grievous error by allowing the Germans to get the first tactical missile. When the $1 million was eventually paid to Goddard's widow, it was premised partly on the convoluted reasoning that the Germans stole Goddard's ideas, which were then stolen again in the 1950s by the U.S. military, which reproduced German rocket designs.

Rocket Man takes Goddard's side in every dispute about credit, and that is the author's choice to make. But in order to come to the Goddard-only conclusion, Clary says little about von Braun, whose lifetime feats for two nations—from the first functioning long-range missile through the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs to the 1969 landing on the moon—significantly outnumbered Goddard's. Clary sometimes simply seems uninterested in the German side of the coin. When *Rocket Man* pauses to note that one of von Braun's assistants, Arthur Rudolph, was "forced to leave the United States in 1984" after his role in Nazi slave-labor use became known, Clary does not tell readers that Rudolph was the program chief for the Saturn V that carried the astronauts to the moon. The German rocket program of the first half of the 20th century was horrifically tainted by its role in service to a wicked regime, but a book that wants to assess credit for the early achievements of rocketry should have done more to give von Braun's crowd its due.

It seems strange that Robert Goddard could have been a famed, admired man who spent years obsessed with the idea that he was not famed or admired enough. His name will never be forgotten. What more can an inventor ask? Sadly, *Rocket Man* does not really explain why Goddard found so little satisfaction in his own accomplishments.

Gregg Easterbrook, a *Washington Monthly* contributing editor, is the author of *The Progress Paradox*, which will be published in December by Random House.

Boy Genial

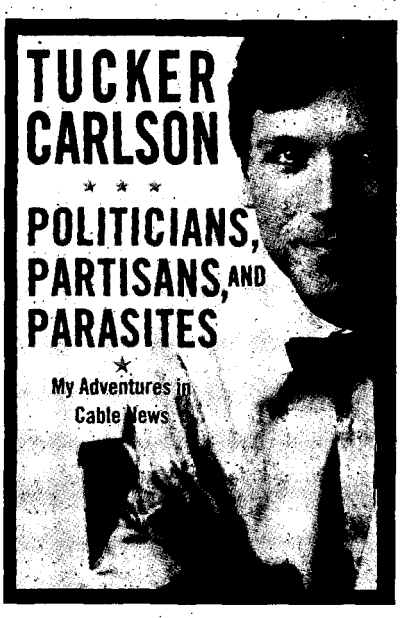
Tucker Carlson's nice-guy conservatism.

By Jamie Malanowski

I have a feeling that this will neither be the first nor last time you'll hear this question, but at this writing, some weeks before publication, it does have a glow of originality about it. Here goes: If Tucker Carlson offered to eat his shoe and tie if Hillary Clinton's memoir sold a million copies (as it did), what could she fairly offer to eat if Carlson's new book, *Politicians, Partisans, and Parasites: My Adventures in Cable News*, also scaled that best-selling Alp? The contents of Imelda Marcos's closet? She could offer anything; barring a right-wing conspiracy to hoist Carlson to the top of the charts, it's a nearly riskless bet.

This isn't to say that Carlson has written a bad book. Carlson is best known as the co-host of CNN's "Crossfire"; he's the one in the bow tie with the insouciantly undergraduatish demeanor (and who also isn't Paul Begala). He seems like a pleasant sort, and in reading this book, one gets the sense of what it must be like to sit next to him in the bar car of the Metroliner as he travels between Washington and New York. The book is full of good gossip and diverting adventures, and when you get off, you're grateful that you've lucked into this companion, and not, say, a conservative fundamentalist who wants to rehabilitate Joe McCarthy.

Carlson has a good eye for detail,



Politicians, Partisans, and Parasites: My Adventures in Cable News
By Tucker Carlson
Warner Books, $24.95

and that helps him recognize the odd characteristics in people that make for good vignettes. He catches Bill O'Reilly blowing hard ("I've almost been killed three times," Carlson quotes O'Reilly, dubiously), Barney Frank in a shrewish mode ("I think you're filled with hatred," Frank sneers at him), and Jerry Falwell embracing his brothers in publicity hoghood, Alan Dershowitz and Geraldo Rivera ("he's a brilliant fellow.") He tells about the night Jim Traficant came on the show drunk, affectionately reveals that Bill Press, his former

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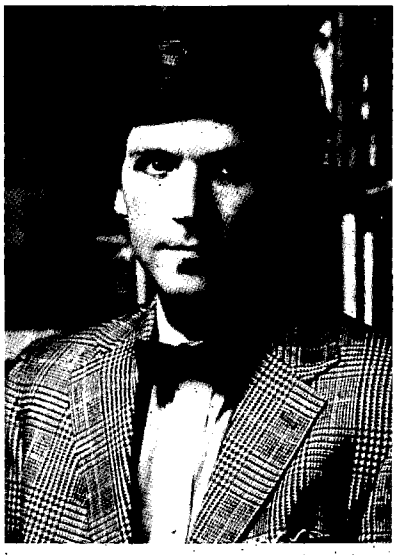
co-host on a show called "The Spin Room," seemed to operate a restaurant plugola scheme, and offers a brief but spot-on parody of the bombastic Chris Matthews. He calls Karen Hughes a liar who would make "a fascinating chapter in an abnormal psychology textbook" because she accused him of inventing the words he quoted George W. Bush saying in a magazine profile.

This delectable candor, unfortunately, makes it all the more disappointing on those occasions when Carlson, making like Sally Rand doing her fan dance, throws a thin veil of discretion over his tales. He tells the story of a night during the adjudication of the 2000 election when he and Press hastily conducted their show from a park outside the Supreme Court. Throwing the show together on the run, they dragooned a congressman passing by to appear. "Just don't say you found me hanging around the park," says the congressman, whom Carlson says is widely known to be gay in the Capital but is rather more closeted at home. Carlson also talks about a "senior member of Congress" who is one of Carlson's "favorite politicians," who is "witty, smart, decent, and loves dogs" and who is also "completely bonkers," as evidenced by his deeply held belief that JFK was killed in a *coup d'état* by rogue CIA operatives. He talks about, but does not name, the TV show host who insists that everyone on his show appear to be shorter than he. Carlson also tells about the night he had dinner with a friend who is also an unnamed TV host. As they were leaving the restaurant, the two men stopped to introduce themselves to two women at a nearby table. During the ensuing conversation, Carlson's friend proceeded, unbidden and unpermitted, to pick the walnuts off one woman's desert, then ostentatiously lick his fingers.

Why keep these identities a secret? Perhaps it's a publicity stunt; Carlson packs in just enough clues in each anecdote that some enterprising reporter for *The Washington Post's* Outlook section could easily find out



Tucker Carlson says the best advice he ever got about being on television came from Larry King. "The trick is to care," King told him, "but not too much. Give a shit—but not really."

the identities. More likely, it's just a matter of trying to have his cake and tell everybody about it, too. At one point Carlson argues that it's pretty easy to be a newsman; far from having to pry secrets out of people, most just can't shut up. "Most people can hardly wait to reveal their secrets," he writes at one point with a certain condescension. You have to think Carlson has simply succumbed to the urge to blab, careful to hold up a branch or two to camouflage himself. Whatever the reason, one wishes we had ordered another round of martinis and stayed on the train until Boston.

One of the best things about Carlson is that he doesn't take himself too seriously. He describes his entrance into television as something of an accident, and rolls his eyes at the haphazard ways some of his programs were produced. He admits that he is often, on-air, "an inappropriate laugher," and cheerfully reports the comments of a New York magazine editor who told him the camera angles made him look "freakish," like "an ugly man in the funhouse mirror." (Tina?)

This lack of seriousness also seems to affect his views on politics and on his profession as well. He's pretty conservative, but not very self-righteous about it. He thinks it's kind of funny that red-meat righties like Tom DeLay and Bob Novak say that he's "not a real Republican." What he doesn't seem to be is rabid in the way we know a good, grown-up talk show host must be. There's plenty Carlson doesn't like about liberals, but what he seems to dislike most is that they've lost their sense of humor. Neither is Carlson pious about being a journalist. He rather blithely admits that recklessness in a source is a good thing, that nuance is the enemy of good television, that newsmen love news no matter who it hurts. He says the best advice he ever got about being on television came from Larry King, and it had nothing to do with bow ties. "The trick is to care," King told him, "but not too much. Give a shit—but not really."

Carlson has a good eye and a good ear. *Politicians, Partisans, and Parasites* is pleasant entertainment, but who knows, one day it might grow up to be a great comic novel about Washington.

Jamie Malanowski is a New York writer.

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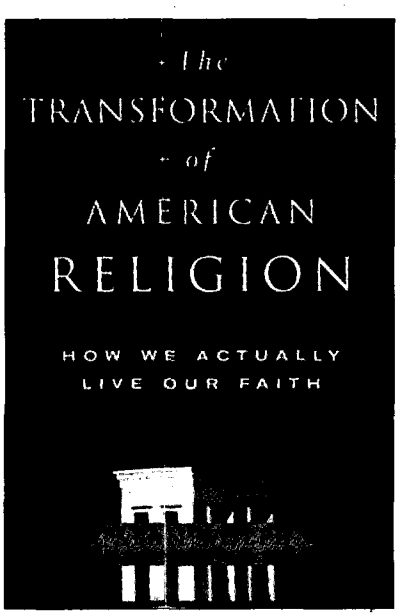
Revival of the Fittest

Are evangelicals really dumbing down American religion?

By Amy Sullivan

I was a Jesus geek before being a Jesus geek was cool. In the Midwestern Baptist church where I grew up, we had quite a personal conception of the Lord and Savior. On Christmas, in addition to celebrating with more traditional desserts and carols, we baked a birthday cake and sang a rollicking tune called "Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus." Mrs. Crain, my Sunday School teacher, talked about getting "Jesus bumps" instead of goose bumps. And during the "praise and petitions" part of the worship service that preceded prayers, it was not unusual for someone to offer thanks to Jesus for the recovery of a purse left in a dressing room at J.C. Penney's. Catholics may have a saint for lost causes, but we had a deity for lost pocketbooks.

In the days before VeggieTales, we read Christian versions of Archie comic books, in which Betty, Veronica, and the whole gang traveled the world proselytizing. We sang praise songs displayed on overhead projectors, flocked to Amy Grant concerts, and (Lord help us) performed rap songs with puppets, using the baptistery as a stage in order to recruit kids for youth groups. We listened to countless sermons that boiled down to essentially the same point: We were doomed unless we asked Jesus to save us.



The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith
By Alan Wolfe
The Free Press, $28.00

In his latest book on the nature of American faith, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith*, sociologist Alan Wolfe calls this kind of evangelicalism "tacky." He also says it's the future of American religion, a "religion [that] has been so transformed that we have reached the end of religion as we know it."

The cause of this transformation, according to Wolfe, is the competitive need to appeal to "switchers," those who change religious traditions and whom he compares to free-agent athletes looking for the best deal the market can offer. As Wolfe undoubtedly knows, but does not point out, competition among churches is not new. Protestant churches have angled for ways to attract parishioners ever since towns offered more than one denominational option—Max Weber described this American phenomenon at the turn of the 20th century. In addition, the rise of church potlucks in the 1950s was partly an attempt to woo potential suburban congregants by offering the best tater-tot casserole or ambrosia salad or themed "Luau Night" in town. While this trend is not new, Wolfe hones in on the fact that it has been accelerating in recent decades.

Today's religious communities face competition not only from other denominations, but also from other religious faiths and from the siren call of secular society. While a 1955 Gallup Poll found that only 4 percent of Americans had switched from the religion of their childhood, by the mid-1980s, that number had risen to over 30 percent. Even that figure does not reflect those who, while not switching religious traditions, fall away from the faith in which they were raised. It is efforts to attract these "unchurched" —or, more accurately, the religio-phobic—that have been behind the broad transformation of American religion Wolfe describes.

Americans are savvy consumers, and they behave no different when it comes to religion. Since its founding, America has always offered more religious choices to its citizens than most other countries. But the general pattern of consumerism in this society has led to an exponential growth in those choices. Americans are shoppers, they want to make their own decisions, they are increasingly comfortable with other people making different choices without passing judgment, they are more demanding that institutions cater to

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their needs, and they want lots of options. They don't want one kind of blue jeans; they want boot-cut, low-rise, reverse-fit, classic-cut, stretch-fit, flare, slim, cuffed, cropped, sandblasted, rinsed, or faded. Or maybe they want corduroys instead. So it's not surprising that Americans have demanded more variety in the area of religion, and that they are more comfortable switching between traditions with different offerings.

The market leader in this appeal to religious consumers has been the evangelical community. Wolfe identifies two social developments—preference for personalized faith (which has led to the Protestantization of most religions) and distrust of leadership and institutions—that have driven most of the changes in modern American religion. Evangelical churches, many of which combine Jesus-as-a-buddy theology with daycare, food courts, and concert seating, have responded most directly to those trends. Other religious traditions, in turn, have had to steadily conform to the evangelical model in order to compete for members.

Wolfe outlines the growing challenge to religious communities this way: "Attempting to attract or to keep congregations whose members have been so strongly influenced by a common American culture, all of America's religions face the same imperative: Personalize or die." Put that way, it sounds rather dire. But he's right. Many Americans are looking for user-friendly faith, a cuddly God, and comfort-fit worship options. A Presbyterian church in Memphis uses PowerPoint presentations to highlight the main points of each sermon, just in case congregants doze off for a moment in the extra-cushy pews that are all the rage now, or are otherwise distracted from closely following the message. A reform synagogue in the Bay Area offers a "synaplex" experience—"different Friday night services for different tastes, just as the nearby movie theaters offer many smaller screens instead of one large one." My old evangelist Archie comic books have been replaced by David and Jonathan adventure comics and Bobblehead versions of Moses, Samson, and Noah.

Soundtrack from the VeggieTales movie "Jonah"

Evangelical churches, many of which combine Jesus-as-a-buddy theology with daycare and food courts, have forced other religious traditions to steadily conform to the evangelical model in order to compete for members.

The anti-institutional bent of many Americans that is reflected by declining trust in business and political institutions has also influenced the structure of religious communities, new and old. When a Jewish *havurah* (the equivalent of home-fellowship worship) needed to find a new rabbi, members insisted that the ad emphasize they were seeking a "teacher and resource person," not a religious leader. Some megachurches don't display religious symbols like a cross for fear of driving away those who dislike signs of religious authority. And a small but growing trend can be found in the home-churching movement, similar to home-schooling in that both attract conservative Christians who feel alienated from public life and distrust public institutions. Unlike the Puritans in England who gathered for worship in their homes because they feared persecution if they worshipped publicly, today's home churchers choose to limit their fellowship circle to their family because they disapprove of the corruption they believe is inherent in church communities.

In assessing the impact of these transformations in religious communities, Wolfe fears that we are witnessing a watering-down of religion that provides feel-good answers without requiring sacrifices of adherents. He quotes religious historian Randall Balmer, who asks, "Jesus will save your soul and your marriage, make you happy, heal your body, and even make you rich. Who wouldn't look twice at that offer?" By bending over backwards to cater to the needs of religious "consumers," Wolfe argues that religion has become no different from any other part of society. "Television, publishing, political campaigning, education, self-help advice—all increasingly tell Americans what they already want to hear," he notes. "Religion, it would seem, should now be added to that list."

Well. For anyone who cares about the future of American religion, that is a fairly depressing judgment.

Wolfe correctly describes an important phenomenon that is taking place primarily in evangelical circles. To some extent, it also holds true for some Catholic and Jewish communities, although he has to stretch a bit to fit those examples—such as Catholics who make waves by meeting in small groups for Bible study—into the larger description of the "new" American religion. And if Wolfe characterized it this way, as a phenomenon strongest in evangelical circles that becomes less distinct in traditions further removed, his analysis would be precise.

He misses an important part of the picture, however, when he makes sweeping statements about the impact and scope of the trend, such as: "Religious believers increasingly live in suburbs, send their children to four-year liberal-arts colleges, work in professional capacities, enjoy contemporary music, shop in malls, raise confused and uncertain children, and relate primarily to other people with whom they share common interests." As written, this sentence is absurd—the vast majority of Americans have always been "religious believers" and did not just recently move out to the suburbs or begin listening to contemporary music. If by "religious believers," however, Wolfe means "conservative evangelicals," then he is correct. The flaw

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in his analysis is that he takes on-target observations about evangelicals and expands them into universal assertions about all religious Americans.

Moreover, although the American religious scene has indeed become a marketplace, user-friendly religion is not the only option on the shelves. Wolfe skips over a smaller, though crucial, countertrend—a movement toward orthodoxy that has paralleled, and is in some cases a backlash to, the rise of the religion-lite communities chronicled in the book. Most churchgoers are familiar with this phenomenon. Indeed, among my close friends are half a dozen former Baptists who became Episcopalians, a number of friends whose less-observant families are perplexed by their adherence to Orthodox Judaism, and several Catholics who seek out high-church services, often even attending Latin masses. Much has been written about this trend, including the 2002 book *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*, by journalist Colleen Carroll. And I can personally attest to the small but significant migration of evangelical Christians to orthodox Christianity.

Because although I grew up in a Baptist church where there was no need to worry about questions (I was shushed when I asked the pastor where all of the people came from if Adam and Eve only had sons) and where worship came in a fun, easy-to-swallow package, I left that tradition to make my home in that mustiest, most endangered of denominations, the Episcopal church. If flashy, PowerPoint-enabled, blue-jean religious services are all the rage, why would anyone join a liturgical tradition characterized by rituals, sacraments, and vestments? Wolfe would probably proclaim that my friends and I are outliers. But I think there is another reason he doesn't mention this countertrend.

Wolfe is too honest to omit an example just because it doesn't fit his pattern. More likely, it's that he suffers from an ailment common to sociologists of religion since Emile Durkheim turned his anthropological eye on tribes and rituals—a heavy reliance on functionalist theories. In other words, researchers attempt to identify what function religion plays in people's lives. Are parishioners looking to create a sense of community to replace the family structure? Does religion provide an ethical mooring in these morally uncertain times? Are Bible studies and youth groups serving essentially the same purpose as bowling leagues and the Girl Scouts? These types of questions drive much of the study of religious communities, particularly for those scholars who come from non-religious backgrounds, as Wolfe notes in his book that he does.

That is unfortunate, because religious folks can be decidedly illogical. After all, they believe in things like reincarnation and the transubstantiation of body and blood into bread and wine (or Welch's grape juice, if you're Baptist). I left the Baptist church not because the music and food weren't up to snuff or because it failed to provide a sense of community. In fact, I have yet to find a church that meets those criteria as well as the church of my childhood. I left because I ultimately found the tradition theologically unsatisfying. Evangelicals place such unswerving emphasis on converting the "unsaved" that life, once I was saved, was pretty anticlimactic. The one-note "come to Jesus" sermons that brought me to the altar failed to provide any guidance for how to live as a Christian in a morally and ethically complex world. Most Sundays, I sat in the pews with an "I gave my soul to Jesus and all I got was this lousy t-shirt" feeling.

Orthodox traditions offer more applicable lessons for the religious life—the peerless sermons of Harvard Memorial Church's Rev. Peter Gomes are my standard for practical religious instruction—but they often require sacrifices that are at odds with self-interest. Being a religious individual in this modern world is a more complicated and challenging task than perhaps ever before. And it is exactly this kind of behavior that can't be understood by relying on traditional sociological explanations.

Years before George W. Bush gave a shout-out to Jesus in a presidential debate and officially brought evangelicalism into the mainstream, I was on the cutting-edge of American faith. Although I didn't realize it at the time, my Baptist church offered what the people are looking for: a personal God, informal worship, practical prayers, and pop-culture tie-ins. Those characteristics have shaped much of modern American religion, and Wolfe's observations about this wide-ranging development are spot-on. But it is going too far to claim that, "In every aspect of the religious life, American faith has met American culture—and American culture has triumphed." American faith has more varieties than Baskin Robbins has flavors; some have met the onslaught of culture by co-opting certain aspects, others have capitulated, and still more have firmly retained their sacred separateness. And the American faithful defy generalizations as well. I may look for all the world like an Episcopalian now, but I can still perform a puppet version of the Parable of the Prodigal Son that would knock your socks off.

Amy Sullivan is a doctoral student in sociology at Princeton University and the author of Political Aims, www.politicalaims.com.

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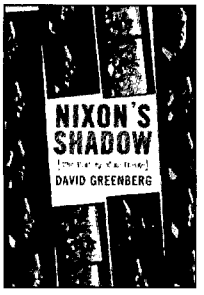
On Political Books IN BRIEF

The Nixon Rorschach

By Jeff Greenfield

He was a figure of national controversy as a freshman congressman. He was an embattled vice-presidential nominee before he was 40, a washed-up political loser before he was 50, a president who went from the biggest landslide reelection in history to resignation and disgrace in less than two years. He redefined himself as a (partially) rehabilitated elder-statesman-wise-man whose funeral—nearly half a century after he first set foot on the political stage—was attended respectfully by every one of his five successors.



NIXON'S SHADOW: The History of an Image by David Greenberg
W.W. Norton & Co., $26.00

Measured by its length, and by the passions it stirred, Nixon's shadow stretches across our history more as a shaping event—say, the Civil War—than as an individual. To find something fresh to say about this figure may seem impossible. But David Greenberg, in his first book, pulls it off. By focusing not on what Nixon *did*, but on what he *meant*—to friends and foes, journalists and historians—Greenberg has done more than provide us with a new understanding of the 37th president. He has produced a work that consistently challenges much of the received wisdom about how politics works. Indeed, I am hard pressed to think of a book on politics as bracing and original as this one.

Rather than administering yet another flogging to the image-based, focus-grouped, slickly packaged world of American politics, Greenberg takes as his central thesis a more nuanced notion:

"The pictures we hold of politicians are rarely just manufactured and foisted upon us. They emerge from a dialectical or collaborative process between politicians and their audiences. We filter the images that politicians project through our own political, cultural, intellectual, professional, and psychological lenses." Armed with this insight, Greenberg takes us on an eye-opening flight across the varied terrain of Nixon's images, as understood by a wide range of friends, foes, and observers.

To his original California boosters, Nixon was more than a political commodity, even if advertising salesman Roy Day, one of the committee of 100 that set out to recruit a congressional candidate, proclaimed, "This man is salable merchandise!" To those California business folk, suspicious of both government bureaucracy and Eastern corporate-media powers, Nixon was the common-man persona of "conservative populism."

"Nixon pioneered the use of populist language and imagery in the service of free-market economics long before the Reagan revolution, before the much celebrated backlash against the liberal indulgences of the 1960s," Greenberg writes. Indeed, Bill Clinton's 1992 acceptance speech, saluting the "forgotten middle-class," was a clear echo of the theme Nixon hit decades earlier.

It will also come as a shock to those of us who remember Nixon as the hapless foil of the testosterone-rich JFK that Nixon was hailed as a charismatic politician, full of "fight and fire," and that this famous debate loser blew away incumbent Democrat Jerry Voorhis in their joint encounters.

When Nixon got to Washington, it was liberals who projected their fears onto him, not because of his pursuit of Alger Hiss (liberals actually supported Nixon in the main on that count), but out of more pervasive fears about how politics was changing: "The horror of Nazism and the Holocaust, and their echoes in the Red Scare, fueled a fear of the mob and a distrust of ordinary people's capacity for rationalism in the face of propaganda and demagoguery, especially when they were yoked to technology and the mass media," Greenberg writes.

Thus, Nixon's famous "Checkers" speech, scorned by his foes as a maudlin exercise in emotional manipulation, was actually the first great triumph of media politics. It also represented, Greenberg argues, an early sign of an impulse with huge political consequences: the increasing distrust liberals held for "middle America," the first signs of what would come to be called "liberal elitism"—a force that still provides grist for conservative mills.

Again and again, Greenberg demonstrates how Nixon's image was refracted through the groups that came to judge him: To New Left radicals, utterly alienated from any faith in America, Nixon was the leader out to cancel the 1972 elections, the better to establish a neo-fascist state. To his beleaguered defenders, he was the victim of a press corps and an establishment that could not abide his values, and so set out to destroy him

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with a Watergate caper that may well have been fashioned by his enemies.

Later in life, the rightward drift of American politics convinced many historians, and some of his one-time adversaries such as *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker, that Nixon had in fact conducted a liberal presidency in areas such as race and the environment. And just as Greenberg earlier warned the legion of psychobiographers not to interpret political disagreement as proof of a psychological defect, he warns against any unified field theory of Nixon based simply on his policy stands.

"Understanding a President's importance required reaching beyond policy to appreciate the feelings and reactions he inspired from the people he led. Those feelings and reactions are what invest a public figure with meaning, and meaning is what we historians are trying to find."

Apart from his provocative—and, to my mind, largely convincing—thesis, Greenberg offers treats at almost every turn. In talking about the 1968 presidential campaign, famed for the media manipulation detailed by Joe McGinniss in his *The Selling of the President*, Greenberg notes that Nixon's lead over Humphrey steadily diminished until it almost disappeared. So it is "just possible the conclusion to be drawn from [McGinniss's book] was that Nixon's image-making didn't work." And in his first year in office, Nixon's press coverage was on the whole favorable.

It was, he writes, some of Nixon's old hands—like one-time counsel Len Garment—who scorned his efforts at rehabilitation, arguing that Nixon as portrayed by acolyte Monica Crowley was Nixon "at his worst—craven, pompous, vain, vindictive, and often unforgivably silly."

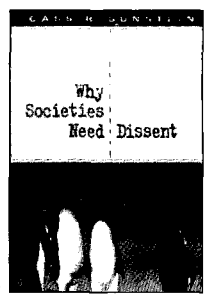
Because David Greenberg has pushed aside the obvious, because he has mined not just historical records but also books, films, TV sketches, and other artifacts of popular culture, he has produced a strikingly compelling portrait of one of American politics' most fascinating figures. In the process, he has shaped a treasure trove of insights about how politics really works. This is not just the debut of a highly promising thinker, but also a work that has already fulfilled that promise.

Jeff Greenfield is a CNN senior analyst and *the author of The People's Choice* and *Oh, Waiter! One Order of Crow.*

Agree to Disagree

By Emily Bazelon

CASS R. SUNSTEIN IS A PRIME mover behind the intensifying Senate fight over President Bush's nominees to the federal appeals courts. Sunstein has counseled the Democrats on the Judiciary Committee to stand up to the Republicans, whose "disciplined, carefully orchestrated and quite self-conscious effort has radically transformed the federal judiciary," he warned this spring in *The American Prospect*. "What was then in the center is now on the left," Sunstein writes in comparing the courts of 20 years ago with those of today. "What was then in the far right is now in the center; what was then on the left no longer exists."



WHY SOCIETIES NEED DISSENT
by Cass Sunstein
Harvard University Press, $22.95

Sunstein's forceful stance matters because he's a respected scholar (he teaches law at the University of Chicago) and because he's a restrained, thoughtful liberal (he clerked for Thurgood Marshall, but cites Sandra Day O'Connor's minimalist approach as a model). Ideology does affect the way judges vote in important cases, Sunstein has argued to senators who worry that it's unseemly to oppose a nominee simply for being too far to the right. Now he has done the research to prove his point and then some.

Most of *Why Societies Need Dissent* isn't about partisan politics. It's a survey of social science research about group conformity, aimed at showing why the pressures exerted by groups often lead to bad or ill-informed decision making. As a counterpoint, Sunstein demonstrates the value of naysayers, particularly those who offer new information along with wagging fingers. The book is written in the crisp, level tones of a lecture—the Oliver Wendell Holmes Lectures at Harvard Law School, to be exact, which Sunstein gave in February.

Still, Sunstein's concern about the Bush nominations explains the book's timing and its most original contribution: a study of the voting patterns of appellate judges. Along with two other researchers, David Schkade and Lisa M. Ellman, Sunstein looked at thousands of votes cast by these judges, who hear appeals in panels of three. As you might expect (unless you're a senator determined to stick your head in the sand), he and his colleagues found that in ideologically contested cases, Republican appointees tended to vote along more conservative lines and Democratic appointees tended to vote along more liberal ones. More strikingly, the judges were significantly influenced by the political affiliation of their co-panelists. For example, Democrats (to use Sunstein's shorthand for judges appointed by Democratic presidents) voted to strike down affirmative action programs only 28 percent of the time between 1980 and 2002. But a Democrat who sat on a panel with two Republicans voted to invalidate the programs in 45 percent of cases. The votes of Republicans were inversely affected by their co-panelists: They voted against affirmative action programs 57 percent of the time overall, but only 32 percent of the time when they sat with two Democrats.

Sunstein's study showed that split panels also moderated decision-making in cases involving sex discrimination, sexual harassment, the liability of company directors for corporate wrongdoing, and industry challenges to environmental regulations. Capital punishment and abortion cases were two interesting exceptions.

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Judges don't bend their convictions in deference to each other's views when questions of life and death are at stake, Sunstein surmises.

What to make of the judges' malleability in other areas? Sunstein gently suggests that judges are as vulnerable to peer pressure as insecure teenagers. An all-Republican or all-Democratic panel "tends to go to extremes" because its members reinforce each other's predilections rather than challenging them with competing arguments. On a split panel, by contrast, an outlier judge can act as a whistleblower by forcing his colleagues to adhere more closely to legal precedent.

Given the title of his book—not to mention its dedication to Judge Richard A. Posner, the iconoclastic conservative who is one of Sunstein's faculty colleagues—it's no surprise that the author cheers for these dissenters. In Sunstein's view, cozy unanimity ill serves the law by narrowing the accepted grounds for discussion. The real danger of the lockstep conservatism of the Bush nominees is that they'll rub out counterarguments from the left by wearing down the remaining Democratic minority. After all, Sunstein writes, the judges he studied were "behaving as ordinary people do," and ordinary people "do not like to be lone dissenters."

On Sunstein's ideal appellate court, judges with a mix of perspectives would debate each other in each case, increasing the chances that a wide range of arguments would be taken seriously. That sounds almost unassailably reasonable—until Sunstein gets to his quite radical proposal for reform. Instead of randomly assigning judges to panels, as is customary, he thinks the chief judges who make the assignments should deliberately split the panels between Republicans and Democrats.

This is a direct attack on the traditional notion that judges merit special authority because they apply neutral principles. It means abandoning the idea that judges can ever be reliably apolitical. So, it's sure to be condemned by judges and academics, liberals as well as conservatives.

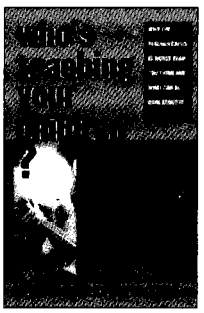
But Sunstein is unlikely to be fazed by the criticism because his proposal lines up perfectly with another reform concept he's long supported: "deliberative democracy." The best way to guard against runaway extremism in society at large, Sunstein thinks, is to sit people down together for reasoned and informed debate about fundamental questions of policy and morals. The idea is to offer an alternative to a liberalism that's myopically focused on individual rights and a conservatism that puts too much faith in market competition between interest groups. Sunstein approvingly cites a study in England which found that when people with different beliefs read factual material about an issue like crime prevention and then talked about it, their views often merged toward the center (actually, toward the center-left).

There's something wistfully pinheaded about deliberative democracy—it sounds a lot like law school. The most important factor in the British study, Sunstein suggests, was that the participants were presented with "a set of written materials that contained detailed arguments for both sides and attempted to be balanced." For most Americans, balanced reading material isn't likely to replace TV attack ads as a main source of political information anytime soon. But reading through opposing briefs is already at the top of an appellate judge's job description. Sunstein is right that deliberative democracy is within the reach of the courts. He's also right that as the out-of-power party, the Democrats have the most to gain from preserving the courts' ideological mix.

Emily Bazelon is a senior editor at *Legal Affairs* magazine.

Bungle in the Jungle

By Andrew J. Rotherham



WHO'S TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN?
by Vivian Troen and Katherine C. Boles
Yale University Press, $24.95

DESPITE ANY NUMBER OF INSIGHTful books on the problems of American schools, no writer has galvanized the public about education the way Upton Sinclair did about the meat industry in his 1905 classic *The Jungle*. That's too bad, because while many, if not most, American public schools do a pretty good job, large urban schools and districts—with their terrible working conditions and general dysfunction—are just as ripe for a catalyzing wake-up call as the meatpacking plants were in Sinclair's day.

In *Who's Teaching Your Children?*, veteran teachers Vivian Troen and Katherine C. Boles set out to tell the inside story of American teaching and to issue a call to action for a better alternative. Like Sinclair, they largely succeed in issuing a powerful indictment, but get lost in the solutions.

As the authors make clear, teachers endure a largely miserable professional life, beginning even before they enter the classroom. Prospective teachers must undergo a costly regimen of classes in order to be licensed, classes that contribute little to student learning. Once in the schools, newly-minted teachers face an appalling sink-or-swim atmosphere. They are isolated from their peers and discouraged from visiting the classrooms of other teachers, not rewarded for special skills, expertise, or accomplishments, and given frequently useless opportunities for professional development and growth. Teachers are under pressure to watered-down academic standards, and they face a lack of respect for the profession overall.

"How many people would willingly study for and enter a career if they knew beforehand that their first day on the job would be very much

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like their last 30 or 40 years later?" Troen and Boles ask. Given that talented young people are drawn to jobs where initiative, skills, and performance are rewarded at least as much as seniority and hierarchy, the prevailing system virtually guarantees that the best and brightest will not choose to become teachers.

As 30-year veterans of the system, Troen and Boles avoid a ham-handed critique of teachers unions. They applaud the historic gains unions secured and cheer recent initiatives by local unions to embrace some educational reforms. Yet they point out that "the cold hard fact remains that little has changed in the vast majority of American schools."

But if their analysis of the problems of the teaching profession is spot on, their solution is less than convincing. The authors offer their own grand reform idea: "The Millennium School" (modestly characterized as "a total approach to solving the fundamental problems of elementary education"). It is an appealing model although so far just that— a model. Their ideal Millennium School is a small one where teachers have collaborative opportunities woven into the fabric of the school day. For instance, educators would work in teams rather than toil in isolation. New teachers would have plenty of mentoring from their more experienced colleagues, and would teach part-time in an internship model.

The Millennium School concept shares a couple of problems with other attractive education reforms. First, what may work at a boutique level may be impractical as a broader reform. Change is hard to pull off in one school, let alone district or state-wide. (Troen and Boles wrestle with this dilemma partly by proposing intermediate ways to infuse existing schools with some of the characteristics of Millennium Schools.) Moreover, there is a chicken-and-egg problem. We need Millennium Schools to attract more good teachers, but plenty of good teachers are a prerequisite for having many successful Millennium Schools. Troen and Boles look to teachers with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification to serve as mentor and lead teachers. The trouble is there is no empirical evidence that these teachers are in fact more effective than teachers without NBPTS certification. There is considerable evidence that those teachers are unlikely to be found in the poorest schools.

The authors fall into the same trap they chastise others for: proposing singular solutions to multifaceted problems. For instance, they are critical of charter schools—independent public schools started by teachers, parents, and community organizations. These schools are freed up from most rules and regulations but held accountable for meeting the terms of their public charter. It's true, as Troen and Boles contend, that many charter schools haven't succeeded. (Though several recent studies not cited in the book indicate disadvantaged students do at least as well or better in charter schools than in conventional school settings.) Yet ironically, it is in charter schools that the authors' ideas for giving teachers more authority and decision-making responsibility are being used. The point is not that charter schools are necessarily better or worse than traditional public schools. It's that we need a public school system that is more pluralistic in how it approaches problems, empowering those responsible for its success, and demanding real accountability for results. That, after all, is how other professions improve.

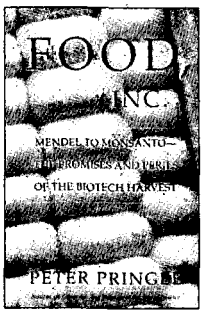
Troen and Boles help the education reform dialogue by asking the right questions. But as any progressive educator these days ought to know, there is often more than one right answer.

Andrew J. Rotherham is director of education policy at the Progressive Policy Institute.

Green Genes

By Stephanie Mencimer

SHORTLY BEFORE HIS MAY TRIP to repair U.S. relations with Europe, President George W. Bush gave a speech in which he blamed Europe for allowing Africa to starve because of the continent's five-year ban on American imports of genetically modified (GM) foods. "By widening the use of new high-yield biocrops and unleashing the power of markets, we can dramatically increase agricultural productivity and feed more people across the continent," he said. "Yet our partners in Europe are impeding this effort. They have blocked all new biocrops because of unfounded, unscientific fears."



FOOD, INC.: Mendel to Monsanto—The promises and Perils of the Biotech Harvest by Peter Pringle

Simon & Schuster, $25.00

Bush's claim must be regarded with a healthy dose of skepticism. Inquiring minds might want to check out Peter Pringle's new book *Food, Inc.* for a more nuanced assessment of the E.U. ban, as well as the potential for biotech foods in Africa and the rest of the developing world.

Pringle is a veteran British journalist whose previous book was on Ireland's 1972 Bloody Sunday. He took a journalist's approach to the issue, attempting to peel away the hype and hysteria surrounding the advent of GM food. Looking around the world at the race to acquire and develop genetically engineered plants, Pringle raises the possibility that GM foods might help the developing world by creating heartier breeds of staples for tough farming climates in Africa and elsewhere. But even as he strives to be evenhanded, he can find very little evidence that the technology will ever deliver what promoters like Bush promise.

Much of Pringle's assessment stems from his study of the Green Revolution, the last major advance in farming productivity, which was

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launched after World War II. The combination of fertilizers and new plant varieties that defined the revolution increased the total amount of food available per person around the world by 11 percent, while hunger declined 16 percent during the 1970s and 1980s. But Pringle notes that many of the technologies developed 50 years ago are still unavailable to farmers in the Third World, mostly because they are simply too expensive. In order to grow the hybrid seeds developed by groups like the Rockefeller Foundation in the 1950s, farmers also needed to buy mountains of expensive and dangerous pesticides and fertilizers, particularly to sustain the monocultures advocated by the revolution's promoters.

The same is true with the GM foods. Pringle writes, "The chemical company that sold powerful, all-embracing new weed killers now also sold seeds that grew into plants especially designed to resist those herbicides. To compete, the farmer had to buy both the seeds and the weed killer. Once again, only those who could afford the new package survived."

Even the much-hyped golden rice, which is supposed to prevent blindness in the Third World with an extra boost of beta-carotene, almost didn't make it there. The scientists who invented golden rice wanted to give their invention to Africans for free, but in their attempts to do so, they discovered that their research infringed on 70 patents belonging to 36 different corporations, all of whom would have to sign off on any deal.

So when Bush talks about Europeans allowing Africa to starve, it's not because he thinks they won't help Africans grow GM food. Few biotech firms, in fact, are interested in creating higher crop yields of African staple foods. Pringle points out that not a single seed company has produced improved varieties of African staples like rice, cassava, or yams. And why would they, when it's so clear that the poor African farmer can't afford to buy them? When Bush accused the European Union of denying food to Africa, he meant that it was obstructing consumption of the big bags of American corn sent as emergency relief in the famine.

Last year, in the face of surges of drought and massive flooding, southern Africa suffered a serious famine that left 15 million people facing starvation. Yet Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Zambia refused donations of American food that contained GM seeds. Pringle quotes Zambia's president Levy Mwanawasa saying, "Simply because my people are hungry is not a justification to give them poison." Mwanawasa wasn't crazy; he knew that plenty of non-GM corn was available for relief supplies, so he wasn't turning away food for his starving masses. But he had a reasonable concern that if such GM seeds were used not just to feed people but by local farmers to raise new crops, the interbreeding could have devastating effects on the viability of native plants for which the country was entirely unprepared to cope.

The United States has blamed the European Union for spreading fear of the new food with its outright ban, while the European Union accused the United States of trying to dump corn it couldn't sell elsewhere on starving Africans and patting itself on the back for its charity. In May, the United States filed suit with the World Trade Organization to force the Europeans to repeal their ban because of the serious damage it has done to American agribusiness. (Americans have mostly accepted GM foods on the foolhardy belief that the government would protect them from dangerous products—the same mentality that has led to hundreds of deaths from dietary supplements. Also, as consumers of Tang and Wonderbread, we tend to embrace most food technology as "progress.")

The United States may be able to force Europe to take our exported food, but it can't force consumers to eat the food. Overcoming the European suspicion about "frankenfoods" will be a tough road, for reasons Pringle makes very clear. He takes a close look at the real dangers presented by the GM foods—everything from the creation of "superweeds" to the eradication of native plant genes to the risks of allergies and concludes that risks are very real, if overhyped. There is real risk of the creation of superweeds because of increased use of herbicides on GM plants, as well as the possibility of unstable parts of foreign genes moving around inside plant genomes and inadvertently turning on other genes that would make a food poisonous—a process that does not occur in natural cross-pollination and plant breeding. Yet extensive and meaningful information about those risks simply doesn't exist because the companies that hold a monopoly on GM foods have never done the research, and the government didn't require them to do so before selling their products to unsuspecting consumers.

For all the serious risks of GM foods, Pringle states simply that there are very few benefits to balance them out, at least not for overfed Western consumers. GM foods don't taste better, nor are they generally more nutritious. They don't, in fact, reduce pesticide use by much, and any reductions are generally offset by an increase in herbicide use. As Pringle notes, "Since the beginning, while the industry claimed that their products would save the world from malnutrition, seed companies created only crops that made money for themselves and the wealthier farmers who could afford the premiums. Even Western consumers were yet to receive a direct benefit from these novel foods." As a result, Bush may discover that is much harder to convince Europeans to eat GM corn than it is to persuade Americans that two RVs in the Iraqi desert constitute a mortal threat to American security.

Stephanie Mencimer is a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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